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ABSTRACT

A study focused on the extent to which historical and contemporary subjectivities interplay with structural and cultural constraints to influence the decision making and human agency of Mexican American adults of the Southwest in nonparticipation in adult education. The issue of nonparticipation was explored from a social action paradigm. Data were also gathered regarding the action taken in response to perceived educational needs and desires. Information was collected from open-ended interviews with 30 Mexican American and Chicano/a adults (22 females and 8 males) in 2 urban communities in Colorado. Findings of the study include the following: (1) study participants exhibited tremendous cultural pride and identity, which influenced individual decisions and actions to engage in culturally insensitive social institutions; (2) a majority of individuals reported past efforts to upgrade academic and vocational skills; (3) almost all study participants indicated a lack of faith in the dominant enterprise of education based on experiences of educational exclusion in childhood or adulthood, intercultural struggles, and larger social and economic inequalities; (4) participants resist discriminatory educational practices by refusal, by creating their own opportunities for learning, by relying on cultural norms and values, and by proving themselves by character instead of by educational credentials. Adults who had participated in adult education reported teacher insensitivity, monocultural curriculum, poor quality programs, and a lack of intercultural understanding. (Contains 93 references.) (Author/KC)

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STRUCTURAL-CULTURAL FACTORS OF NONPARTICIPATION IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION BY CHICANO/A ADULTS IN URBAN COMMUNITIES IN COLORADO

Barbara Sparks

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In the end, I must, however, take full responsibility for the report presented here.

Abstract

This study focused on the extent to which historical and contemporary subjectivities interplay with structural and cultural constraints to influence the decision-making and human agency of Mexican American adults of the Southwest in contemporary nonparticipating behaviors. The issue of nonparticipation was explored from a social action paradigm. Data was also gathered regarding the action taken in response to perceived educational needs and desires.

Findings of this project include: study participants exhibited tremendous cultural pride and identity which influences individual decisions and actions to engage in culturally insensitive social institutions; a majority of individuals report past efforts to upgrade academic and vocational skills; and almost all study participants indicate a lack of faith in the dominant enterprise of education based on experiences of educational exclusion (youth and/or adult), intercultural struggles, and larger social and economic inequalities. Further findings include: participants resist discriminatory educational practices by refusal, by creating their own opportunities for learning, by relying on cultural norms and values, and by proving one's self by character vs. educational credentials.

Finally, those who have engaged in adult education in the past report similar situations to those experienced in childhood education. These include teacher insensitivity, monoculture curriculum, poor quality programs and a lack of intercultural understanding.

Tables

Table

1.1 Study Participants 14

4.1 Strategies of Resistance and Production 60

5.1 Efforts to Return to School 80

5.2 Similarities Between Education Experiences as a Youth and as an Adult 92

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii
Acknowledgements iii
Tables iv

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1
  Background 1
  Individual Barriers 4
  Further Considerations 5
  Statement of the Problem 8
  Research Design 10
  Data Analysis 11
  Study Participants 13
  Conceptual Framework of the Study 15
  Theories of Production 16
  Conceptualization of Resistance 18
  Resistance in Education 19
  Definition of Terms 22
  Implications of the Study 22
  Organization of the Report 23
2. SUBJECTIVITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY 25
  Nativity 26
  Ethnic Identity 29

	Communities of Assistance	29
	Otherness	32
	Economic and Social Differentials	34
	Language	37
	Discussion	41
3.	EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AS YOUTH	43
	Educational Histories	43
	Youth Education	45
	Teacher Attitudes	46
	Academic Discrimination	49
	Cultural Regard	52
	Discussion	54
4.	ACTION TAKEN TO MEET EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	56
	Why Persist?	56
	Cultural Action	59
	Practices of Resistance and Production	59
	Acts of Refusal	60
	Avoidance	62
	Alternatives	66
	Preferences	69
	Creating Opportunities for Learning	73
	Discussion	75

5. ADULT EDUCATION EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS 78

Efforts to Return to School 78

Improving Skills 79

Adult Education Experiences 81

Marginalization 82

Learning Expectations 85

Intercultural Understanding 88

Similarities Between Education Experiences as a Youth and as an Adult 91

Attitudes of Teachers 91

Academic Quality 93

Cultural Respect 95

Discussion 96

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 98

Research Questions 98

Discussion of Findings 98

Historical Context of Education 98

Efforts to Reach Educational Goals 99

Decisions and Actions Influenced by Experiences 100

Implications for Practice 101

Recommendations 103

Summary 104

APPENDIX

A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM 106

B. INTERVIEW GUIDE 107

BIBLIOGRAPHY 111

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> More than ever before, there is a growing realization that the established scholarship has tended to define America too narrowly (Takaki, 1993, p.6).

Background

Through the 1980s and into the 1990s the issue of the education for Latino/as has grown more urgent as English literacy demands of today's society have increased and the gap between educational achievements and workplace demands has widened. Latino/as, as a whole, have substantially higher rates of limited English skills in addition to the fewest years of schooling on average than other racial groups, just over ten (10) years (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), regardless of the measure used. "Across the age groups, there are even larger differences in average literacy proficiencies and years of schooling between White adults and respondents of Hispanic origin. Among 16- to 18-year olds, the differences in average years of schooling between the two groups is 1.1 years, and the proficiency differences range from 47 to 53 points across the scales. Among 40- to 54-year olds, on the other hand, the difference in average years of schooling is 3.2 years, and the proficiency gap is between 84 to 89 points on each scale" (p. 38).

Colorado, along with California, New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, have the highest concentration of Mexican Americans; they also have higher than national average rates of school noncompletion. The national average rate of high school dropout for Mexican Americans is 45 percent (Segura, 1993, p. 200).

Latino/as are not given much attention in English literacy research, however, nor are they provided equitable services in this country according to a major analysis of data from three national data sets (Macias, 1990). As a young and growing population this group will influence the social fabric of the future yet a large portion of Latino/as will be denied access to contribute fully in American economic, political, social and cultural life. At least three factors contribute to this limited access to full participation in society.

First, although a large majority of Latino/a adults are bilingual, there is a failure to recognize Spanish literacy and its significance (McKay, 1986). This failure to recognize Spanish language abilities as literacy implies that English literacy is the only literacy that counts. Further, the assumptive stance of such a view increases the "alleged pool of illiterates who are stigmatized as being nonproductive" (Macias, 1990, p.6) rather than recognizing the valuable biliteracy resources people possess. Whereas certain bilingual Anglos are valued members of society, bilingual "minorities" are considered conflicted and unassimilated into American culture. As one of the largest Spanish speaking countries Macias (1990) suggests there is a need to legitimize first language (Spanish) literacy in the United States.

Second, Latino/as face institutional constraints as they attempt to complete secondary education. Individual testimony of undereducated Latino/as almost always begins with the failure of the public schools to teach people how to read and write English (De La Rosa & Maw, 1990; Vargas, 1988). Many narratives tell of underfunded public school facilities, misassessments of academic abilities and tracking into low ability groups, discriminatory discipline and promotion, and patriarchal bureaucracy in lower class neighborhoods (Segura, 1993; Vogel Zanger, 1994). Economic, social and political consequences of limited reading and writing abilities among Latino/as are the same as those evidenced among other racial, ethnic, gender and class groups. Although these consequences have not been well documented for Latino/as, limited literacy abilities, nonetheless, diminish employment opportunity, political participation and the ability of Latino/a parents to intercede in the education of their children.

Third, Latino/a adults who seek to enroll in English literacy or basic education programs are often turned away, placed on waiting lists or charged for services which they cannot pay (Vargas, 1988)._The underfunding of adult basic education and English literacy is historic. At the same time, however, the issue of underfunding is often used as a scapegoat for complacency toward inadequate services and low quality programs. Generally, public and private efforts to address the problems of access for Latino/as have been insufficient. Programs tend to serve those who are easiest to reach and assume some level of oral English fluency. Traditionally, Latino/as have been underserved by literacy efforts despite a variety of programming and assistance.

The ideological stance of denying the value of biliteracy skills of Latino/as, the secondary educational barriers faced by Latino/a youth, and the structural mechanisms of exclusion evident in many adult education programs all contribute to the difficulty of getting an education thus restricting full participation in society. Despite the growing concern about educational advancement of Latino/as in the United States there is little research about Latino/a adult participation or nonparticipation in adult education, in general, or English literacy and basic education, in particular.

Individual Barriers

Nonparticipation in traditional adult basic education programs by underserved people of color remains a major concern for educational practioners and administrators. Several faulty beliefs, or myths, are used to explain issues of nonparticipation by eligible adults who do not enroll in mainstream adult basic education and English literacy programs. First, there is the assumption that while obstacles exist they can be overcome. Second, once these barriers such as time, cost, and location are removed people will engage in traditional programs. Third, if people do not engage in mainstream programs once the barriers are removed it is their lack of motivation, a deficit, that impedes them. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) contend that while barriers exist to engagement in learning opportunities these obstacles are not insurmountable. Such narrow beliefs, which focus primarily on the individual, are of limited use for understanding nonparticipation especially by those persons and groups outside the mainstream culture due to differences of race, class and/or gender.

This psychological perspective, which currently dominates explanations of nonparticipation, suggests that nonparticipating individuals are deficient and there is lack of fit with Eurocentric values of individual motivation. The dominant discourse of motivation implies a choice, an act of will, which contributes to the individuality of the learning activity. The ideology of choice moves the blame onto those who are judged to be "illiterate" on the basis that they could have chosen otherwise. Stalker (1993), in her study of voluntary participation in adult education, found that adults viewed their opportunities as other-determined challenging the notion of adult education as voluntary activity of freedom and choice.

Rockhill (1983) points to other risks of approaching participation as a problem in motivation. She suggests these include "reifying motivation at the expense of situational factors that also bear a heavy influence upon the event of participation. The event of participation is looked at as though it were an isolated act in the person's life rather than as an integral part of the person's life situation and social context" (p.23).

Larry Martin (1990) contends that the low levels of English literacy and the struggle to successfully complete adult literacy programs, especially by young African Americans (or other people of color), suggest monumental obstacles for those seeking access to socioeconomic mobility through culturally insensitive learning environments. A model of nonparticipation based on individual barriers masks the social inequalities, political struggles and cultural differences that people of color, women, and the lower class experience. The radically different basis for the lived experiences of oppression and subordination that such individuals contend with and the meaning they make of those experiences suggest a different explanation for nonparticipation.

Further considerations

Concepts of barriers, or deterrents, and the discourse of motivation formed out of dominant cultural experiences present one view. A single focus of explaining the world must give way to allow other voices, other realities to be heard; "we cannot really hear or speak about what is muted" (Lugones, 1990, p. 49). The dearth of studies on adult basic education and Latino/as attests to the silences. Maria Lugones further speaks of the "cracked mirrors" which falsely reflect Latino/a realities, realities that are not consistent with Anglo middle class realities.

In a study conducted by Marcia Farr (1991), of literacy activities of families in Chicago's Mexican-American community, English literacy was actively taught by parents within the homes. English literate adults within the social network were held in high regard. Farr indicates, however, that when first investigated (during the first year and a half of fieldwork) she regarded literacy practices as minimal and infrequent. Upon further analysis she found that such practices were occurring and were woven into the fabric of family life. Not only literacy for children, which was linked to schooling opportunities, but literacy for older adults was evidenced by texts in English and Spanish within the community and the home. Farr concluded that these families, especially as a social network, have considerable experience with literacy, routinely handling literacy demands in this as well as other domains and consistently indicating interest in improving their literacy skills. English literacy training does occur outside mainstream funded programs countering the notion that nonparticipation means literacy education is not taking place. According to Farr, an understanding of cultural values and the context of literacy in the community is required.

In a longitudinal study conducted in New York City by the Literacy Assistance Center, with adults participating in basic education and English literacy programs, Albert and D'Amico-Samuels (1991) concluded that the extent of program participation by individuals is clearly shaped by the realities of adult's lives and responsibilities rather than by student choices. Recorded absences from daily attendance revolved around work demands, childrearing and other life responsibilities. The data from this study help to generate a picture of adult learners as "highly functional" participants in their communities and as embedded in a variety of networks and groups (p.51).

Speaking to the project's goal of determining the impact of adult education programs, Albert and D'Amico-Samuels state that research "must be done, however, with full cognizance of the interplay between factors external to adult education programs (such as the changing job market and the availability of day care) and internal aspects of program operation and student participation and achievement...for a more comprehensive understanding of adult learners..." (p.23).

In a study of Mexican American enrollment in Texas adult basic education programs Richardson (1980) found that although Mexican Americans had more experiences of problematic participation (e.g. more illness, childcare, having to work) their enrollment in programs was greater than their eligible numbers would indicate. Richardson cites a pattern of high Mexican American participation in adult basic education as compared to a significantly lower participation rate by Anglos, three times less than for Mexican Americans.

A recent study by the Colorado Adult Literacy Commission (1991) reported similar findings. An analysis of participation in federal and locally funded adult basic education programs for 1987-88 indicated that of the total enrolled, 38% were Latino/a. A similar proportion was Anglos (38%). With a Latino/a population of 13% compared to an Anglo population of 81% in Colorado (1990 Census of Population), it would seem that Latino/a adults are motivated to take advantage of educational opportunities and are interested in learning. These studies reflect the commitment by individuals to engage in adult educational opportunities but they do not illuminate the underlying factors that influence the resistance of eligible adults who do not enroll in traditional adult programs.

In an unpublished descriptive study conducted in Pittsburgh with nonparticipating but eligible African American adults Quigley (1990) found that respondents held education in high esteem for social and economic advancement; learning and education were valued. The findings also suggest there are deeper reasons to nonparticipation than barriers as identified in the traditional literature especially for those eligible to attend but who choose not to.

Statement of the Problem

In a study conducted by the University of Texas (cited in Taylor, 1989) as many as 57 million people nationally have difficulty with English literacy tasks. Stedman and Kaestle (1987) have concluded that about 30% of the adult population have either minimal or marginal functional literacy skills. More recently, according to the National Adult Literacy Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993) 47% of the adult population or 90 million people have limited English literacy skills. Of those eligible for services only 6% participate (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992). In other words, a full 94% of eligible adults do not participate in traditional programs. Colorado, the site of this study, has been only slightly more successful with a 9% enrollment rate (Gonder, 1991) and a corresponding 91% nonparticipation rate.

As stated by Rockhill (1983) there is the necessity of "understanding nonparticipation from the perspective of the nonparticipant as well as the broader social dynamics that so influence the formation of that perspective" (p.27).

One problem with current published research in understanding the complex nature of English literacy, language and nonparticipation is that the investigations record the relatively small number of participating adults. To continue to rely on studies that survey participating adults to understand issues of nonparticipation is to make invisible the disproportionately large number of adults who are eligible for services but who are not served. Likewise, these studies mask the fact that the United States, as an industrialized nation, has one of the highest rates of illiteracy.

The obvious question remains, why do so many people who are eligible to enroll in traditional adult basic education and English literacy programs choose not to? The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of why some of the 90 million eligible adults in the United States who have difficulty with English literacy tasks do not participate in traditional adult basic education programs. Specifically, this study focused on the extent to which factors of race, ethnicity, class and/or gender interplay with structural and cultural constraints to influence the decision-making and human agency of Latino/a adults, in particular native born Mexican Americans of the Southwest, in contemporary nonparticipating behaviors. The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. What are the historical contexts of education, learning and literacy (Spanish and English) experiences of Mexican American adults?
2. How do individuals describe their efforts to reach their educational goals?
3. How do those experiences influence individual decisions and action taken regarding adult basic education and English literacy programs?

The intent of this project should not be construed to imply that Latino/as represent the largest nonparticipating group. However, due to the growth of the Latino/a population, the large number of adults with low level English literacy skills, and the group's location in relation to the dominant culture, questions of nonparticipation take on a special urgency.

This study represents the multiple views of native born Mexican American adults who were not engaged in traditional English literacy and/or adult basic education programs to get their views about language, literacy and education. Questions exploring structural and cultural constraints on everyday life were investigated. By going directly to those adults who were not enrolled in these programs and asking for their perspectives a fuller understanding of nonparticipation is possible.

Research Design

This report presents data collected from Mexican American, Chicano/a, adults in two urban communities in Colorado investigating their perceptions of education and their responses to the structural constraints that impinge on their lives. My purpose was twofold: to articulate the lived experiences of Mexican American adults in urban settings in Colorado who are eligible for adult basic education services and to investigate the historical and cultural factors that influence people's decisions and actions regarding further education.

The methodology appropriate to a study of perceptions and associated actions is variously called qualitative or interpretive research. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and direct observation. Individuals were selected to participate in the study using Goetz and LeCompte's (1984) recommendations for criterion based selection.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) described key informants as those individuals who have special knowledge and insight that the researcher wishes to discover. In this study, eligible but nonparticipating adults were viewed as the key informant in possession of knowledge needed to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomena under study. Using an open-ended interview guide, each individual was interviewed in one or two sessions, each lasting between sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes. The format of the interviews followed the interview guide approach (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lofland & Lofland, 1971; Patton, 1990).

Interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed using a word processor. All sessions were documented and journal entries were recorded after each interview. Field notes taken during the observations were expanded immediately following each observation period.

Data Analysis

The following data analysis strategies for data organization, theme development and testing were employed. The constant comparative method as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) whereby collection, coding and analysis occur jointly in order to develop theory as it emerges was the process utilized. Building grounded theory is facilitated at each step through generation of categories and themes, testing emergent hypotheses and searching for alternative explanations of the data while striving to develop denser theory. Guided by initial concepts and hypotheses, shifts occur as data are collected and analyzed.

Consistent with building grounded theory, a four step process of analyzing and interpreting the data was used. First, organization of data entailed internal coding of interviews looking for emergent themes in individual cases. Second, testing of emergent hypotheses involved challenging the hypotheses and searching for negative cases, then incorporating these cases into the larger constructs. Third, logical analysis, or the crossing over of classification schemes, was used to generate new insights and typologies. Fourth, identifying key linkages is mandatory (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973) once categories are identified and properties and boundaries are determined for these categories.

Steidman (1991) suggests that the last phase of analysis and interpretation is to ask oneself what the research has meant for her. Through this self reflective process the researcher, as instrument, proposes connections among events, structures and social forces operating in people's lives with their responses to these multiple factors and the actions they take. The analysis, or convictions, of emergent grounded theory then constitutes a reasonable statement of the phenomena studied.

In summary, the data were deliberately searched for relevant themes, then the themes were examined for their connecting relationships, and finally these themes were analyzed for their relationships to the entire cultural scene. These steps were sequential only in the initial stages of data collection. Operational categories which guided the initial questioning were replaced or enhanced with emergent constructs that were identified in the text of the respondents. Participant generated themes were sought in order to more authentically represent their views. As collection proceeded all steps of analysis were incorporated in an integrated fashion. The process used to identify these themes and relationships was iterative, a moving back and forth between data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Study Participants

The question of nonparticipation in traditional adult basic education and English literacy programs by Mexican Americans is the primary guide for the selection of the study participants. Due to problems of artificially bounded groups who are located within a largely dispersed area and who rarely come together as a group a selection strategy is often more appropriate (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). Individuals who fit the criteria of the population under study may be identified as the data collection progresses.

Selection is developmental and ad hoc rather than an a priori parameter and as such accommodates the targeted population of this study.

In this study, potential participants were identified through referral either by agency intake counselors or by individual members of family, friend or acquaintance. Since participation in this study was voluntary not all identified individuals were interested in participating.

The individuals in this research project were chosen using simple criterion-based selection. The following list of attributes were used in this study:

1. The individuals must be 18 years or older.
2. The individuals must be Mexican American adults born in the United States.
3. The individuals do not have a high school diploma.
4. The individuals must not be currently enrolled in adult basic education or English literacy, or GED preparation instruction.
5. Participation must be voluntary.

The selection process resulted in the following group of individuals: thirty (30) individuals between the ages of 18 and 62 were interviewed in two urban communities in Colorado. Twenty two were women and eight were men. All study participants were native born Mexican Americans. Most were third generation; some were second generation. All were of mixed Spanish, Indian and Mexican heritage. All participants were either bilingual Spanish and English or monolingual English.

Table 1.1

Study Participants

Age	Women	Men
18-19 Year Olds	2	1
20 Year Olds	3	2
30 Year Olds	7	2
40 Year Olds	4	2
50 Year Olds	4	1
60 Year Olds	2	0

The setting for this study was urban communities in Colorado. The choice to investigate urban communities versus rural or suburban communities or a combination was determined by the interest in the particular complexities encountered in the urban setting. The economic, political, and social influences of urban experience differ from that of rural or suburban experience. Colorado Springs and Denver were, therefore, the specific sites selected for this project.

Conceptual Framework of Study

This study explored the issue of adult education nonparticipation from the sociological perspective, or a social action paradigm. Such a perspective affirms the dialectical interplay between social structures and people's everyday lived experiences. The approach used here is a structural-cultural model which focused on the interaction effect between cultural consciousness and historical structural determinants. Individuals and groups are not simply impacted by social structures, relations, culture and ideology; individuals have the capacity to create their own lives.

The theoretical framework used to interpret the data is a critical social perspective. This tradition is concerned with the critical analysis of society and societal structures, institutions and mechanisms. This critical tradition further encompasses opposing theoretical approaches (1) those which emphasize understanding the reproduction of existing social relationships and (2) those which emphasize agency and the production of meaning and culture through collective and individual resistance to imposed knowledge and practices. However, what essentially defines critical educational theory is its moral imperative and its emphasis on the need for both individual empowerment and social transformation. The paradigm of production and agency where individuals and groups assert their own interests and contest ideological and material forces imposed on them is the perspective employed here.

Theories of production

Production theories are concerned with the ways individuals and groups assert their own experiences and contest or resist the material and ideological forces imposed upon them in a variety of settings. Critical production theorists in education focus their analysis on how individuals produce meaning and culture through their resistance and their individual and collective consciousness. These theories are concerned with the social construction of knowledge and the various ways language and knowledge can be critiqued and made problematic. There is also an emphasis on the power of structural determinants such as material practices, modes of power, and economic and political institutions.

Antonio Gramsci's (1971) work has become increasingly influential in critical educational theory because of his analysis of consciousness. Central to his thought is a concern with the various ways in which dominant society imposes its concept of reality on all subordinate classes and the possible ways in which the oppressed can create alternative cultural and political institutions to establish their own means to oppose and change it.

Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony, or the predominate authority, to analyze the interplay between social control mechanisms with a sense of cultural values and attitudes that go beyond the conscious control of ideas. Boggs (1976, p.39) interprets Gramsci's view of hegemony as "an organizing principle that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization in everyday life". The sense of hegemony as control for the reproduction of dominant society has led to a reading of Gramsci where every individual is shaped through hegemonic ideas and historical circumstances (Mouffe, 1979). A further analysis of Gramsci's work reveals an insistence on the power of individuals to contest the control of the dominate society and the resulting need for the dominant class to reimpose its world view since it is in constant danger of being questioned and resisted by subordinate groups.

The ideological development of personality is the result of learning and experiences in all kinds of settings-the family, work, church, schools, informal relations. However, the ideological consciousness is formed not through informal institutions but rather through the formal apparatus for the transmission of ideology-the schools. The formation and regulation of dominant social, economic, and political ideas in individual consciousness is a continuous process of reaffirmation.

Gramsci's view of consciousness insists that individuals are not passive and that learning is not mechanical. Further, he recognizes individuals as historical products and recognizes the active quality of being. His notion of the "organic intellectual" calls for a philosophy of "critical elaboration" which emerges from an understanding of the common sense world and the historical and economic forces which have shaped it. "The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is and in 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory" (p.326). Although he is concerned with how consciousness is constituted through ideological means, he asserts that consciousness is capable of critique and transformation.

Central to Gramsci's work is the recognition that the present is the result of struggles in the past. He calls for the development of an understanding of historical existence in order to understand the present. The power to control and reproduce dominant ideas is never complete, it is always in process of being reimposed and always capable of being resisted by historical subjects. It, therefore, becomes a theoretical tool that can be used in textual analysis and ethnographic investigation.

A conceptualization of resistance

Paulo Freire (1985, 1981), through his adult literacy work in Brazil, Chile and Guinea-Bissau, is committed to a belief in the power of individuals to come to a critical consciousness of their own being in the world. While he sees individuals as determined he sees they are also able to reflect on that determinism and thus begin to "free themselves".

Central to his work is the understanding that individuals are agents, both engaged in the construction and reconstruction of meaning. Thus men and women must seek to understand the forces of hegemony within their own consciousness as well as in the structured, historical circumstances in which they find themselves.

Much of Freire's work has involved literacy education in societies emerging from historical colonialism and imperialism. As the dominant culture strives to encourage negative attitudes toward the culture of the dominated, while at the same time imposing their way of being and doing, tensions mount. In truth, the dominated have been forbidden to be who they are. The ability of an individual to appropriate reality by naming, reading and therefore knowing that reality can lead to action and the possibility of transforming reality. This naming of one's reality and the making of meaning can lead to resisting practices in order to change one's circumstances.

Activities of resistance and reaffirmation strive to invent mechanisms for retaining cultural autonomy while attaining economic and political equality. Freire (1985) refers to these responsive activities as "snaps" or breaking points, moments of culture. He contends that these "moments of culture" vary in issue and context as violations of knowing. "As more and more things snap, they bring about mobilization. Initially, this mobilization is minimal. But this mobilization keeps increasing as it takes on different issues in different contexts." (1985, p. 192). The dominated take the initiative and develop their own strategies in order to fight oppression. Freire, therefore, gives us a working definition of the concept of resistance: Individual and group action taken to reaffirm and sustain cultural identity informed by experience.

Resistance in Education

Henry Giroux's (1983) work attempts to apply critical education theory to the question of schooling and attempts to clarify and expand the concepts of ideology, resistance, and hegemony. He addresses schools as both the means of social and cultural reproduction and as sites of the production of individual subjectivities and cultures. Giroux is especially concerned to demonstrate the dialectical nature of social reality, in particular what Anthony Giddens calls the "structuration of structures." (Giddens, 1979) This concern with structuration reflects a belief in the agency of individuals to react to and act upon the social world they inhabit and insists upon the possibility of social transformation through action. Giroux emphasizes a notion of ideology which exists in "a complex nexus of structural needs, common sense and critical consciousness" (Giroux, 1983. p.18). Common sense refers to the level of everyday consciousness with its blend of unexamined assumptions, internalized rules and moral codes, and partial insights. The realm of common sense is open to critique because of the hegemonic ideology it partially embodies thus the contradictions of everyday life and consciousness can be examined and transformed.

Giroux's (1983) work in secondary education points to the dialectic between social structures and human agency. He insists that it is necessary to grasp the dynamics of the dialectic between the reality of social structures, including the institution of education, and human agency where social and material constraints interact with individual and group experiences of power. The interaction effect of structures and agency on one side and culture and identity formation on the other side, therefore, provides a critical forum in which to investigate the embedded issues of nonparticipation and people's efforts to meet their educational needs and desires.

Jennifer Horsman's (1990) ethnographic study of English literacy and lower class women in Nova Scotia illustrates how structures, agency, culture and identity interplay in the everyday experiences and choices of these women. The typical mainstream discourse of illiteracy conceals the social organization of their lives where "space, time and resources are usually located outside women's control and based on the needs of others" (p. 85). She found isolation, violence, lack of support, and poverty. The material conditions and the complexity of their everyday experiences were effectively obscured as standard English was presented as simply correct English rather than a class-based language, where needs of participants were defined by experts rather than acknowledging the lived realities of adults who can determine their own needs and where teaching was conducted as an individualized activity rather than creating the social interaction most of these women wanted. "Literacy and training programs are part of a process which classifies people as deficient, individualizes their problems and offers a remedy that ensures the status quo is maintained" (p. 217). The Nova Scotia women in Horsman's study appeared to resist the power of the discourses (motivation, choice, functionality, needs) that defined them as outsiders, incompetent and stupid by either negotiating what they needed from the programs or by dropping out.

These women reflect the inconsistencies and contradictions of class-based and gender-based experiences that exist along side the Eurocentric ethos. Likewise, these women illustrate how individuals in a different social position to the mainstream are created as objects of discrimination shaped by those threatened with difference and appropriated as strange, exotic and inferior.

In summary, a structural-cultural perspective with notions of structure, agency and power was a useful construct in investigating issues of nonparticipation. The significance of one's historical position based on race, ethnicity, class and gender in society impacted by social, economic, political and ideological constraints, tensions and contradictions is experienced as subjective knowledge. This consciousness interacts with human agency and influences decisions and action.

Definition of terms

For purposes of this study the following terms are defined as they are used here:

* Terms of self identification used by participants in this study include Chicano/a, Spanish, and Mexican. Chicano/a refers to persons (male and female) of Mexican descent born in the United States. It is used interchangeably with the term Mexican American. Spanish, Spanish-origin, Hispanic, and Latino/a are broader terms that refer to persons of Spanish and Latin American heritage (Segura, 1993, p. 213). The term Hispanic is an English word coined by the United States Census to identify all Spanish speaking and/or Spanish origin populations in the United States. (de la Torre and Pesquera, 1994, p. xiii) and is not typically used for self identification as noted by Shorris (1992, p. xv) and further supported by this study. There is no ethnic label that is unanimously regarded as the most appropriate or the most correct one.

* Anglos refer to white or caucasian individuals of Western European descent.

* Literacy is the use of written materials in reading and writing in social cultural activities within a social context as well as the cognitive aspects of acquiring such skills (Reder, 1994, p.33).

* Adult basic education signifies educational programs for adults in basic skills

of English reading and writing at functional levels below the 9th grade (Colorado Department of Education, 1990).

Implications of the study

This study demonstrated the importance of structural and cultural factors in the practical actions taken by Mexican American adults in meeting their educational needs and desires. The strength of these factors suggests a lack of faith in the dominant enterprise of education based on contemporary and historic experiences of educational exclusion (youth and/or adult experiences), intercultural struggles, and larger social and economic inequalities. The implication is that educators of adults need to critique existing programs and the ideology which guides and maintains them. This recommendation is based on the assumption that people are interested in learning and they will participate in adult programs that affirm cultural identity and that promote equality based on difference.

In addition, it should be of great interest to policymakers and administrators to understand what factors underserved adults credit to the difficulty of obtaining an education. Knowledge of how and why such factors influence adult decisions and actions can enable administrators to restructure programs for more democratically equal institutional structures and relations.

Organization of the report

The remainder of this report is presented in the following manner. In chapter 2, a descriptive presentation of the study participants and their subjectivity is presented. Chapter 3 follows with the educational histories of study participants along with their recollections and perceptions of those experiences. Next, chapter 4 presents the actions taken by individuals as they pursue their educational needs and the factors that influence those actions. Chapter 5 examines the experiences of individuals who have engaged in adult education programs in the past with a comparison of the similarities between educational experiences as youth and as adults. Finally, Chapter 6 presents implications of this study and recommendations for adult education practice.

The actions taken by adults in response to perceived educational needs and desires plus implications for the practice of adult education are also discussed.

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECTIVITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

> In telling and retelling of their stories, they create communities of memory (Anonymous. Takakai, 1993, p.14).

As individuals share knowledge of their worlds including everyday routines, habits, social interactions and values they do so from an historically positioned vantage point. Ascriptive categories of race, class, and gender define and position one within socially constructed realities. Likewise, the notion of culture as both an institution rooted in family, schools, media and other structures and as a set of coping tools and strategies influences and promotes meaning in the everyday dealings of social life. Stuart Hall (1992) states "we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, out of a particular culture, without being contained by that position" (p. 258). He further insists that our identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are.

In order to contextualize the findings of this project, this chapter presents a descriptive view of the individuals who participated in this study. First, nativity and ancestral background is presented, then ethnic identity as defined by subcategories of community, otherness, social and economic differentials and language is described.

Thirty (30) individuals between the ages of 18 and 62 were interviewed in two urban communities in Colorado. Twenty two were women and eight were men. All study participants were native born Mexican Americans. All participants were either bilingual Spanish and English or monolingual English.

Nativity

Nativity patterns of the individuals included in this study indicate all thirty men and women have ancestors from old Mexico and parts of old Mexico that were incorporated into the United States after the Mexican conquest in 1848: namely, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. Most were third generation native born Mexican Americans; some were second generation; some were even fourth generation Mexican Americans. All were of mixed Spanish, Indian and Mexican heritage. "Unlike Cubans, mainland Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, most of whom arrived in the second half of the twentieth century, the Mexican Americans live in the light of their own history in the United States" (Shorris, 1992, p.95).

In all accounts, individuals recalled how their parents, grandparents or great grandparents had moved north from Mexico to New Mexico to Colorado. In some cases, this continuous movement also included migration from southern Colorado, particularly through the San Luis Valley, on up to Colorado Springs, Denver or Greeley where they worked in the fields, on the railroads, in the coal mines and in the factories.

> My grandmother moved up to New Mexico before my mother was born. She (my mother) was born in Questa (New Mexico). My father's from Alamosa (Colorado). They met in Denver. My father worked in the fields before he moved here. Then he worked on the railroad. He says, you know, I started working when I was eleven years old.
> (Gloria)

> We were raised in just a little town of Spanish speaking people it's a little town in New Mexico. My father lived here, well, this is where he's lived really for all his work and my mom and us stayed back in New Mexico. He would come back and leave again and send her $20.00 a month.
> (Patricia)

As a result of the migration of families and family members, a regional community of Mexican Americans stretched across New Mexico and Colorado linked by kinship networks and expanded by a strategy of economic survival. Migration had become an essential and integral part of life for Chicano/a villagers (Deutsch, 1987).

> My grandma was born here in Colorado and my grandfather, this was on my mom's side, was born in Texas. Now their parents were born in Mexico. Some of my grandma's brothers and sisters were born in Mexico and then the youngest of them were born here. So like my grandma was one of the youngest. She was born here in the United States. They were farmers, worked in the fields in Greeley. My mom did the beets and the onions and all that stuff. My dad was raised in the colonies outside of Greeley. They worked the fields too. (Sandra)

The colonies built by Great Western Sugar Company for the Chicano/a workers were isolated and always a distance from the nearest Anglo community usually located out of site. The colonies created ethnic and cultural separation as well as distinct economic districts.

One individual related a series of moves in order for her father to find work to support his family. Her grandparents had owned pastoral land in central New Mexico but had lost the title to Anglos due to debt incurred. Her father helped build the railroad in eastern New Mexico for a time but lost his job to Anglos during an influx of Irish immigrants who came to work railroad construction.

The family then moved into town but there was no work there.

> My dad didn't have no job and one morning he listened to the radio and all farms in Colorado were putting ads on the radio. They needed people to come and work in the fields, beets, sugar beets. So my dad, one morning he was having breakfast and listening to the radio and he told my mom.

> Well you know, they're going to pay us to come over there to do that work. My daddy had to. We would just move the family and they had a house for us. That's the way we got to Colorado.
> (Maria)

This pattern of economic migration which led from homesteading to entering the wage labor economy is well documented (Deutsch, 1987; Shorris, 1992; Takaki, 1993). The types of work that brought people north were seasonal wage labor jobs and used by Chicano/as to maintain cultural autonomy, provide multi-source income and maintain relations of community with villagers in New Mexico. Strategies of migration and regional communities helped to define and sustain not only economic but also cultural choice.

Contemporary economics for the individuals of this study indicate continued employment in predominantly manual labor in such areas as gardening, building maintenance, construction, factory work, and health care. Several individuals worked in office situations, one owned a grocery store in a Chicano/a community and several were unemployed. A small number of individuals were collecting welfare when they participated in this study.

All individuals lived in one of the Chicano/a communities in either Denver or Colorado Springs. These are neighborhoods of mixed economic and racial groups. There is a heterogeneity of community conditions where people lived including neatly kept houses and yards with safe parks, churches and thriving businesses. Some respondents lived, however, in public housing projects where community conditions included boarded up buildings, dirt yards and empty lots. Few study participants were property owners.

Ethnic Identity

In trying to get a sense of how people perceive themselves ethnically, as Mexican American, as Chicano/as, questions regarding language and values were asked. Themes that emerged from the individual texts of the people in this study were identified and include notions of mutual assistance, the importance of language, economic and social discrimination, cultural struggle and difference.

Communities of Assistance

The texts of many of these respondents reflect stories of taking care of family, watching over each other, individual family members contributing to the family economy, and sharing of information and skills, in other words, communities of assistance.

Ana relates her early years of taking care of her many brothers and sisters "protecting them, cleaning them, watching after them, and sending them to school". Her siblings depended on her to be there and take care of them. Another woman, Patricia, recalled she and her sister taking care of the younger children in the family after her mother died. Her father worked in Colorado, while the family lived in New Mexico. He would send money home to care for the family. Initially, friends and relatives, in efforts to help the family, wanted to split the children among them. This woman dropped out of school because it was hard on her and she was responsible for the other children. Her father's insistence on her keeping up with her studies and her determination to keep the family together finally convinced family and friends to help her out rather than split the children among them.

During the days of working in the fields, all able family members had to contribute to the family coffers due to the low wages of manual labor and the high prices for commodities. Olivia related her disdain for field work and as a teen she convinced her mother to let her find an inside job so she wouldn't have to work the fields. She found a job at the local laundromat and "really loved that job". At the time her mother had remarried there were already four children and the "strong headed" mother insisted on her children making financial and nonfinancial contributions to the family since the stepfather had gotten several individuals in the marriage package.

Meeting family responsibilities was not only felt by the women but men talked of contributing as well as meeting obligations. Carlos, a young man in his late twenties related his efforts to help his mother after she divorced. He knew he had caused her a lot of grief when he left school but tried to make it easier on her by contributing financially to the family. Eduardo talked of the dual role of father and student. He ended up leaving school because he "had a daughter to support" and had a hard time juggling both. He wasn't getting the kind of attention he felt he needed at school anyway. He recounted that, as he reflected on the difficulty he had of finding anything more than cheap paying manual labor jobs, he was insistent that his two daughters finish school.

Another strong theme expressed was that of "not living off of others". The following comments reflect the dilemma this presents for people who have only their wage labor to count on and the labor they most often get is low paying manual labor.

> You can only do so much but you can also be stopped there. I tried all the programs but I didn't qualify. If you live

> a clean life you don't qualify. If a person's doing the wrong
> things you qualify.
> (Jose)
>
> It's like a Spanish person is trying to get a job and everything
> and you're working but now you have to be a low life to get help.
> That's basically what it is according to this younger generation.
> Only low life get on welfare. You can get all these benefits
> you don't want; they make you lazy. It's discrimination against
> class.
> (Cecilia)

Olivia related her mother's success at keeping her family happy and clothed despite the grinding poverty of farm work. "You don't live off of nobody. We didn't even know we were poor. I'm not kidding. We had nothing but we didn't know it. We didn't know mom used to go to second hands and places like that to buy our clothes. We didn't have nothing compared to some. She was good at it that's all I got to say". She indicated even today they base their family life on morals, "being there for your kids" rather than giving them material things even though they have a much more comfortable life style than what she grew up with.

The strong commitment to help each other out, take care of kids, sticking together are "what's taught in the house". Mainstream values of individualism and competition are counter to what is reflected in these testimonies. One respondent described the cooperation and doing the right thing that is valued in her family. She contrasts that with Anglo ways.

> I see the Chicano family stick together and they unite when they
> have problems. They try to work out their problems trying to do
> the best they can to make that family back together again. We're
> always willing to forgive one another in family situations. I'm
> very proud of the togetherness of our culture. Everybody's always
> trying to do something better you know, where we try to get people

> to do the right thing, like sticking together.
> (Sandra)

This sense of togetherness rather than individualism is further reflected in her comments regarding an Anglo friend and her family's differences.

> My friend's family, they're white and they're all so separate. They have a real separate way of living, they all go their own way. She has brothers and sisters who live all over the place. It seems like I hardly see any families that are white that really stay together. We just all want to get together and be around each other.
> (Sandra)

The community of assistance depicted by the individuals in this study also reflects care beyond the family to include neighbors and friends. Carlos says, "if something goes wrong it's going to take a cop forever to get there and that's why a lot of times the neighborhood just watches over each other, watching each other's house, for an example".

> The people they are my neighbors, they're my friends. I know them all. A lot of people moving in and out I'll go meet them. I know everybody. This lady is Spanish, this one's black, this is Puerto Rican (pointing to houses). When the Spanish lady needs help cleaning her home cuz she's kinda old I go help her clean her house. We have to help each other, you know.
> (Norma)

Otherness

This sense that "we have to help each other" hints at a sense of difference, otherness and struggle that these people feel as they negotiate the cultural borders. Contrasted to the sense of pride one has in the Chicano/a, or Spanish, culture one respondent illustrated the shame she and her sisters felt being Chicanas. "We'd go to school and we didn't want to take burritos to school. We were ashamed of that because we figured all these kids are pulling peanut butter and jelly and we're pulling burritos. That was not good to us. Sometimes we would eat them on the sneak and that's sad" (Olivia). Reflecting now on those days is a sense of wonderment as to how that happened. All her mother's admonitions that she ought to be proud of her heritage didn't carry as much weight then.

Bertha related youth experiences of discrimination from the parents of one of her Anglo friends. She recalled her awareness of their uneasiness at her presence in their house. "It was hard for their parents to like, even, what's the right word, get used to me. I would go over to her house and they would look at me like 'Is she Spanish'?" The contradiction for this woman was due not so much to parental /adult reactions as it was from her Anglo friend's actions. She was used "as a protection" by these, so called, friends since no one would bother them when they were with this woman. She expressed her confusion by all this in telling me "yet I was quiet so I didn't understand their reasoning." Protecting white girls appeared to be the trade-off to gaining their acceptance and friendship at whatever level. Another woman, Margaret, reflected on her fights with white girls. "I used to get into a fight with white girls and I thought it was because she was white and I was Mexican but now I don't believe that it's like that anymore, it's because of how people treated me."

The testimony of each of the study participants is replete with examples of educational exclusion, job differential, social inequalities, and cultural struggles. One such example is one from the young woman quoted above. Margaret told of the prejudice she felt as a young teen shopping in stores and always being watched. She told of being "stared at like I'm going to steal something when I have the money." Her experiences of difference are not set within the same parameters as in her youth but continue nonetheless.

Economic and Social Differentials

Differences in the economic and social aspects of life were documented in the texts of individual stories of labor and work abuse, community neglect, and the lack of police protection which indicated inequities as everyday realities. Striving for individual and group mobility and stability Cecilia described an incident her nephew experienced as he searched for a construction job. Her assessment of differences between Chicano/as and Anglos reflect a sense of conflict.

> One guy hiring my nephew-my nephew knew how to do the work but he didn't have the tools and they said. All your Mexicans, you never save your money and do what's right. They hired a white guy and they threw him out. It's basically, they don't think we're intelligent enough to do things"
> (Cecilia)
>
> Spanish people are real hard workers. Anglos, I don't think are too much into work. You see a lot of them not working. I don't know if it's because of their education or whatever reason you don't see a whole lot of them working and yet you see the Spanish people really working hard. They're doing the jobs, maybe Anglos just want something better.
> (Cecilia)

Maria reported several experiences of job discrimination throughout her life. As a young woman she was taken advantage of by nursing home employees. Since she was willing to work evenings and weekends they would ask her to cover for them by clocking in and out and doing their work. As a housekeeper she was paid less than the nurses she covered for and they took advantage of the situation by paying her the housekeeping rate and keeping the rest for themselves. In another incident she reported filing a complaint against a boss for slander while employed at a restaurant. He threatened her witness with loss of her job if she testified against him; as a result Maria lost the case and had to repay a year's worth of unemployment she had collected.

Another woman, Patricia, told of a situation as a housekeeper in a hospital. She wanted to learn new skills so she could get a better job at the hospital but had trouble getting the support and assistance from her supervisor.

> When I asked them if I could take off a half hour early to go to a medical terminology thing they said no. I went and talked to the lady and said I could go on my days off because they won't let me take off a half hour. But then she went and she talked to them and they arranged that I could take the half hour. But I had to go clock out. What was so hard about the supervisor bending a little bit because a minority person wanted to get ahead. (Patricia)

Jose's experiences in securing jobs without a high school diploma were difficult and frustrating to him. In reflecting on whether a diploma would really help him to get good jobs he stated that "most employers like to give the jobs to Anglos first."

As adults, economic discrimination is not the only difference that individuals in this study must contend with. Community neglect was highlighted by several individuals. Reuben stated he did not feel his neighborhood was kept up "compared to all the other places that are around". He cited the trash that blows around the streets and alleys. Norma reflected a similar situation in her neighborhood but thought it was getting better. Bertha talked of the differences between her neighborhood and a predominately Anglo suburban area. Her husband who worked for the park department took her to see a park project he had been working on. She questioned him, "How come they have one like that and we don't? Where are we at? Cause I'm a naive person, I will admit, in some ways. He told me these people out here are rich people. They know the right people, they know the mayor, they know where to go to get these things to have their beautiful parks. I mean I just could not believe it. Money talks."

Police protection, or lack of police protection, was identified as another indication of the social and economic inequalities of everyday life.

> Just like the incident with this gal here. She liked to have parties and they were really destroying her place and they were fighting amongst each other. I don't know how many times the cops came out and it was always the same excuse. Well, you know until there's really something that you can really see like-in other words, what they were saying was until they actually hit you and bruise you and shoot you, then we can come out and do something about it.
> (Juanita)

> So we called the cops because it was getting out of hand and we needed to have them come out and I think it took them probably over an hour to get there. I thought, these men could be dead and they're barely getting there. It was unreal. We had already taken care of it ourselves. And if something would have happened someplace else, I think, they would have been there a lot faster.
> (Manuel)

> They're telling people there's really nothing we can do. We only had one or two complaints from you. They want to see the actual murder. They want to see the whole thing happen, then, maybe they got something.
> (Roberto)

Lack of police protection, neglect of community services and job discrimination are further dimensions of the social realities. Jose reminds us that "we must stop the separateness. If we look at color we have problems. There is really no one superior."

Language

All individuals in this study grew up in households where Spanish was spoken, although some reported their parents also spoke English. An overwhelming majority of the study participants (90%) were bilingual. There were no monolingual Spanish speakers in this study although the older respondents reported using Spanish as much if not more than English. "It depends on who I'm talking to. My family and friends I speak Spanish. When I go out I speak English" (Maria). Three individuals identified themselves as monolingual English having grown up in Spanish speaking homes but no longer speaking it. Both were women; two were in their 20's, the other was in her 40's. The rest of the individuals fall within a range of proficiency between "not enough to get me through a Mexican restaurant" to "I understand it all but sometimes have trouble completing full sentences" to "we speak both Spanish and English in the family."

As Gloria Anzaldua (1987) notes in her writing "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity-I am my language" (p.59). Knowing Spanish and using it appeared to have high value among individuals. When asked why it is important to speak Spanish Carlos said:

> That's what I was brought up as, that's who I am, that's
> what I did in the past, that's what I do.
> (Carlos)

The importance of language as identity was echoed in the texts of all study participants with several variations on this theme. A range of feelings from pride to shame to conflict were evident in the stories people told. Individuals indicated Spanish is very important to know in order to communicate not only with each other but with

Mexicans who may not know English. "We should all learn it because that's our heritage, that is my culture" (Sandra). One woman, Regina, told of her Spanish-only neighbor who relied on her knowledge of Spanish to help her get around in the community. People also spoke of assisting with translation particularly with Mexican, "it's a good feeling to help someone". Bertha put it succinctly, "I'm Mexican, I think all Mexicans should learn Spanish".

The sense of shame identified in the texts of some participants was in reference to regret at not speaking Spanish or giving up their first language. One of the monolingual women, Cristina, said "it is my language and it's hard when people say you're Spanish and you don't speak it." Some bilingual respondents exhibited a sense of guilt that they had lost some of their Spanish and told of "studying" or learning it again. Judith recalled that when she learned English in school she would practice at home and over time although she and her parents learned English she had lost her Spanish. "I learned Spanish when I was growing up then when I went to kindergarten I had to learn English. I stopped talking Spanish after that. My mom, she talked in Spanish and half English. My dad too. I knew how to speak it real good and I lost it" (Judith). As an adult who married a Mexican immigrant years later, she finally regained her Spanish language abilities.

An alternative view about the importance of Spanish was presented by a couple of individuals. Olivia talked about her extended family frequently using English but that it didn't mean they had lost their culture. They "still have the culture, everything about it. We just don't always use the Spanish". Another woman, Cecilia, talked of her teen years of not using the Spanish she knew. She recalled that not all Chicanas knew Spanish and her friends never pressured her to speak it, "they knew I didn't speak Spanish so it was no big deal and my girlfriends never enforced it that I use it. There was no need for it". The conflict for Cecilia, however, was her regret at not being able to help others who only spoke Spanish.

The role of language as identity is also exposed in people's history when they first learned English. Many individuals in this study recalled memories of learning English. For some, it was an inevitable part of their education; for others it held pain and regret.

> At school we weren't allowed to speak Spanish. I had to learn English. If you got caught you would get in trouble- couldn't get recess, had to stand in the corner. I don't know if it was right but it worked. We learned English.
> (Eduardo)

> I was punished for speaking Spanish. Whenever I got caught I had to write lines. I must speak English. I must speak English.
> (Norma)

Gloria related her mother's history which she was collecting as part of a genealogy project she was putting together.

> They grew up speaking nothing but Spanish until they got into school and then they had no choice but to learn English. So they went to a special class to learn English and then that's when they came home and they started speaking English. They stopped speaking the language.
> (Gloria)

Gloria explained further her mother's regret at giving up her language and her efforts to now teach her children Spanish.

Another recalled the ridicule she endured when she would try to speak English in the local grocery store. The Anglos would laugh at her efforts. Patricia, told of her experiences in the Colorado schools where she had to speak English, unlike the New Mexico schools she came from. She had trouble speaking, reading and writing English. She views her English language abilities as a handicap, "My language was my handicap". She further attributes her school failure to her language skills in both English and Spanish.

The ridicule and punishment for "speaking who you are" contributes to the sense of shame. However, it also contributes to a sense of outrage and indignation for some. After recounting his history of learning English at home since "mom thought we should get in the flow and learn English. It would be easier for us" and still being ignored in school and not getting the attention he felt he wanted, Jose expressed his anger. "Anglos say you're dumb if you don't know English. We say we're dumb if we don't know Spanish." Although Jose tells of his pride in being bilingual and his ability to communicate with more people he also indicated he feels cheated since it never helped him get the jobs he really wanted.

Regaining one's language was expressed in varying ways. Descriptions of having friends teach them Spanish, accounts of losing Spanish language skills while learning English and now using more Spanish again, sending their children to Spanish speaking preschools and elementary schools and listening to Spanish music are some of the ways individuals pursue and affirm cultural continuity. If given a choice of assimilation or acculturation it appears these adults prefer to retain their language and cultural identity while at the same time trying to attain economic and social equality. To give up one's language means giving up or compromising who one is without benefit of access to the dominant culture.

Discussion

Individual testimony presented the continuing conflicts that are present in various aspects of economic, social and political life. Evidence indicates these conflicts have historic meaning that continues to influence both contemporary and day to day experiences. For the most part, individuals and their families have attempted to acculurate into the dominant society by retaining and maintaining their cultural identity. Olivia's assessment that "we were always the outsiders" captures the contradictions of striving for equality without success. In some instances, individuals who gave up their first language showed regret and shame as well as continuing efforts to regain and reintegrate Spanish into everyday life. The struggle over language portrays the dialectical interplay between social structures and human agency. As people have tried to fit into the mainstream they are continually rejected. Yet as they resist the dominant discourse which defines them as outsiders they continue to press up against discrimination and unequal institutions that attempt to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

As subordinated people, Chicano/as live in two worlds, continually moving back and forth across cultural borders as they interface with the contemporary power structure of mainstream society and its dominant values of Eurocentric individualism, competition and middle class privilege. The multicultural and multivaried experiences of the individuals in this study, socially constructed around race, ethnicity, class and gender influence and create a politics of identity and culture dependent upon everyday practices and discourses. As people traverse the boundaries into the public sphere of daily experiences a process of negotiation takes place as a result of what Marcia Westcott (1979) calls, the discontinuities, contradictions, and oppositions rather than the continuities and coincidence between social contexts and individuals.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AS YOUTH

> Amidst the hegemony of schooling, voices of struggle and resistance can be seen to emerge (Walsh, 1991, p. 59).

The educational histories of the study participants, as youth, are presented in this chapter, along with their recollections and perceptions of those experiences. The dominant discourse promotes education as the required credential that will provide access to economic and social mobility and will enable people to participate fully in the social, civic, political, and economic aspects of society. Historical contexts of education, learning and literacy are factors that influence individual decisions and actions in furthering one's efforts to meet educational needs and desires.

Educational Histories

All of the individuals who participated in this study left school prior to completing requirements for a high school diploma or in some cases prior to achieving basic English literacy skills of reading and writing. The majority of individuals in this study left during their 11th year of schooling. Some had tried alternative schools between their 10th and 11th year but found alternatives "in bad areas of town", "they have gangs there too", they were "too dangerous" or had "stricter attendance and that sort of rules". Elena reported signing up for the alternative school but she never went out of her frustration of years of "being a loner and not fitting in". Carlos recalled trying two other high schools before reaching the age of 21 in order to get the required credits for graduation. His efforts even included attending night school in a mountain town where he had relatives living. Several women told of attending high schools outside their districts in order to get an education. One of these women, Sylvia, related her attempt of moving in with an aunt who lived in a suburban area in order to "concentrate on studying". The school office found out she had lied about her permanent address, since she would go to her neighborhood home on weekends. As a result she was asked to leave the suburban school.

Several individuals left during or right after junior high school, never reaching high school. Most of these individuals talked about dramatic differences between elementary school and junior high. Whereas elementary school was "fun", nice teachers", good grades", "I loved science", "I was great at spelling", junior high was characterized by images of "things changed", "trouble", "turmoil", "punishment" and "discourage[ment]".

One woman in the study, Maria, also the oldest participant (age 57), had very limited formal education. She related attending a few days a month or so for a couple of years as she was needed in the family to care for the rest of the children. She was the oldest of twelve children. "I went to school for maybe one day out of the week and I was so embarrassed I didn't go back to school. I didn't like school just because I didn't have enough school".

The rest of the individuals in this study (almost one quarter) left during their sophomore year of high school. These individuals related dramatic changes between junior high and senior high. For some it was grades, for some it was attitude-the teacher's, for all it was a different environment from what they had experienced previously. Individuals spoke of teacher insensitivity, unsafe learning conditions, frustration with courses that weren't challenging and a lack of trust between teachers and students.

All individuals indicated a lack of fulfillment and a desire for more learning opportunities. Since it was not the intent of this study to test and place people's academic skills of reading and writing no attempt at assessment was conducted. Most individuals indicated low level reading and writing skills or not being able to read at all, problems pronouncing certain words, not remembering math, limited reading comprehension, and poor spelling abilities. This information was always volunteered. The point here is simply that these individuals perceive themselves to have educational needs and desires that have not been satisfied.

Youth Education

The thirty participants in this study were asked to detail their educational experiences as a youth through a series of questions about the learning environment, teacher and peer interactions, academic success and struggles. Additionally, questions about ethnicity, culture and identity were posed. Detailed accounts of educational experiences focused on by the study participants described experiences at the junior high and high school levels. As a result, the findings reported spotlight those accounts rather than the incomplete data regarding elementary educational experiences.

Dominant themes that emerged from the collective stories are teacher insensitivity, safety issues, counseling assistance, differential discipline and educational tracking. Descriptions of these concepts, notions, create images of lack of care on the part of teachers and administrators, a breakdown of trust between teacher and student, measures and mechanisms used for control, and lack of quality in educational programs and settings. A broader lens was used to refocus these themes into operational categories to include teacher attitudes, academic discrimination, and cultural respect. Very often, studies of high school noncompletors, hoist the blame of underachievement and noncompletion onto the individual student without considering the structural and cultural constraints these youth must contend with as they pursue educational requirements and interests.

Teacher Attitudes

The attitudes of teachers, one of the central themes of study participant testimony, plays an important role in the academic success of students and has been well documented. Perceptions regarding the attitudes of teachers were described in terms of neglect, put downs, and inattention.

A thirty year old woman who described her elementary school years as fun had different experiences in junior high and left before ever getting to high school.

> The teachers didn't give any encouragement; they weren't into it, they were just there. They didn't care if you finished your work or not. The teachers never showed me what's ahead, I think they should have done that. They didn't seem to care what happened to me. Kids need attention. Now it's even worse, kids leaving earlier.
> (Bertha)

> Teachers pick their favorites, that's where they put their attention. If the kid is not so good they don't really care even though that person wants to learn.
> (Bertha)

This lack of care to the extent of not show[ing] me what's ahead and further admonitions about" kids need attention" are reflections about how things should have been as compared to how things were. As the mother of two pre-teens this woman expressed concern about what might lie ahead for them. "One is getting ready to go to ______ school and I don't hear good things about it. Do you know anything about it?" Lack of appropriate attention is also evidenced in these comments from both men and women study participants.

> At the high school they wouldn't work with you, instead they try to say, "Well, you know, this person is really trying so we'll work with them." I mean how could we really try if they never worked with us, so you know that's another thing.
> (Cristina)

> Didn't feel I was getting as much attention as others. All the teachers were Anglos. They had this attitude thing. They didn't care if I was there, they didn't notice whether or not I was there. I can't push it all on prejudice but it was there. It didn't matter to teachers, they'd say, figure it out yourself. Can't blame me cuz teachers didn't care to help but there was no reason to stay.
> (Tony)

> Here's a paper, do it and turn it in, nothing else and you'd go to them for help and they would just write it on the board. They wouldn't tell you how to figure it out, nothing, they'd just write it on the board, you figure it out yourself. I don't know that it mattered to any of them.
> (Regina)

Awareness of the differences in attention whether due to racial differences, differences of effort, or lack of interest are not forgotten as the above statements indicate. The attention individuals sought was not personal attention but rather academic guidance, learning assistance and teaching instruction, reasonable requests in an educational setting. The social dynamics of schooling experienced by these individuals result in alienation, silencing, and decline in motivation.

A lack of trust between teachers and students was presented by the following statements. Trust as it relates to "knowing" and "legitimate knowledge" appeared to be in question.

Relating experiences of gang violence in her school one woman, Julia, told of her efforts to avoid involvement with the women of the Northside Mafia gang. She related an incident where gang members threatened her and detained her from getting to class on time. When she told the teacher, the teacher wouldn't believe her. Julia said it was a common occurrence and she had reported it to the office several times. The young woman's comments about the teachers included "the teachers are not easy to talk to. They already know the students they want in school. They didn't accept me because I had too many attendance problems". When initially asked why she had left school Julia indicated it was because her family needed financial assistance so she left to get a job and help out.

A male respondent, Jimmy, reported similar experiences with gang harassment and requested a transfer to the alternative school. His request was denied by the principal who told him "you're not going to get anywhere if you won't face your problems". Finally, this statement from Roberto signified the essence of hopelessness and closed options within the educational system.

> I wanted to transfer out because of the violence in the school but they didn't want to transfer me to

> any place else. You know if you're in this district
> you can't go any place else. So there wasn't really
> much of a chance for me anyway.
> (Roberto)

Putdowns from teachers were another set of attitudes described by study participants. Put downs erode trust and indicate a type of contempt that some individuals have carried for a long time.

> I had this one teacher cuss me out, an English teacher,
> so I stopped going to her class but I would go to my
> other classes. Then the principal told me he didn't
> want me back. The teachers would just tell you, like,
> you ain't going to make it in life if you keep doing
> this and doing that. They weren't helping, they were
> always putting you down, they always put someone down,
> they would take it out on a lot of students.
> (Judith)

The above statement was made by a woman who tried going to high school as a young mother. She had to go home at lunch time to switch babysitters and she would be up late at night finishing her homework. She continued in this situation for a full school year.

Academic Discrimination

When asked about educational experiences incidents of several types of academic discrimination were coded. Comments were classified into four subcategories including academic ability, tracking, quality of classes and counseling. Representative statements and statements are cited.

Academic ability appeared to be secondary in relation to class assignment as presented by this twenty eight year old woman. Relating a series of experiences in a pre-algebra course Elena commented:

> I was put in this lower class. I had asked for an algebra course which I could do but was put in pre-algebra instead. I'd go ahead of the book and the teacher would tell me not to do that, when I say to on then go on but not before. I went to class for the final and got a good grade but I didn't go every day. Instead of judging me by what I could do they were judging me according to attendance.
> (Elena)

This same woman told of teachers who would stay on the same subject for three and four weeks at a time. She was frustrated by the slow pace-"show something and go on" was her attitude. Elena judged herself as being held back and not allowed to excel.

Academic discrimination through tracking was described by Gloria in the following way as she related her husband's experiences in high school.

> My husband, when he was going to school, at the time, the teachers told him-well he says, I'll take this class and this class and they said you'll never become more than a labor worker, you don't need that. They set that in his mind that he would never accomplish to really succeed in life.
> (Gloria)

Goals and desires on the part of individuals are not always taken into account, rather a preset view of where a person belongs is often used in scheduling classes. As this woman documents there are underlying and lasting contradictions as a result of the structural mechanisms employed in educational institutions. Patricia was similarly aware that she was put in lower classes. She attributed her status to language difference but it achieved the same effect.

> I knew I was in a lower class all through high school and it was because of my language. I didn't understand it all though. I would see what the whites were doing and I always wanted to be like them-smart. I finally settled for what I could do. (Patricia)

The quality of instruction, differences in course offerings and school equipment are more likely determined by where one lives than what students need or want. Describing the differences between the education her children were receiving living in the suburbs (a conscious choice to avoid the differentials of Denver schools) and a friend's children living in Denver, Olivia stated:

> So they're in the same grade, all these kids and
> she was showing me what they were being taught and
> I was saying what my kids were being taught and let
> me tell you there was a big, big difference, a very
> big difference. And I'm thinking, what in the world.
> She goes I wish my kids could go to school where yours
> are going. That bothered me, I felt bad for them
> especially knowing that they were Chicano kids. I thought
> that's not cool, that's not fair.
> (Olivia)

This same individual related differences in school offerings based on her own experiences as she was growing up. Growing up in Greeley, there was an Anglo school and a Chicano/a school. Starting out at the Chicano/a school, she moved to the Anglo school when her family moved from one of the Chicano/a colonies into the city.

> It makes a difference, it makes a difference what
> they offer you in a white school than what you get
> offered somewhere else.
> (Olivia)

Finally, counseling, as a mechanism for assisting individuals in the choice of courses and career direction, was seen as a service that was withheld from several study participants. The differentials in counseling services were seen to impact both academic direction and eventual economic success.

> I never saw my counselor in high school because
> they were probably saying, Oh she's not college

> material-which I really wasn't. I wasn't even school material.
> (Patricia)

> I mean everybody had a counselor back then in high school but they didn't really take a personal interest in you. They didn't really push you, you know.
> (Gloria)

Academic differentials whether viewed as lack of counseling and career advice; tracking into lower level courses or a direction different from one desired; ignoring academic ability by focusing on school rules and regulations; or limiting the access to quality educational choices are well documented in the texts of these as well as other individuals in this study.

Cultural Regard

The final category depicting educational experiences as youth is cultural regard. Testimony from these study participants represent notions of racial disrespect, prejudice, economic elitism and subordination. One person put it succinctly, "We were always the outsiders" (Olivia).

> I remember this one kid that just because he was poor, these whites they totally just made a mess of his life. At least us we could say, oh well, I guess it's just because the color of our skin. Because they're poor you're prejudice? They wouldn't even want to get near him.
> (Olivia)

Sandra related her experience of showing her Chicana pride which was not shared by the Anglo administrators at the school she attended. "I can remember one time I was wearing this shirt. We used to wear shirts that had green sleeves and then one white and one red panel with the Chicano colors and it said 'Thank God I'm Chicano'. It was a fad, you know. The assistant principal told me I shouldn't be wearing those kind of things to school. You know I had the right to wear whatever I pleased. I'm proud of who I am. He didn't have no business telling me that" (Sandra).

Cultural identity is closely tied to language. The following comments indicate a common experience of individuals who were Spanish speaking as youth. Spanish was not tolerated in the schools when these individuals attended. All of these individuals were between the ages of mid-30s to early-50s.

> I went to school in New Mexico. I was punished for speaking Spanish. Whenever I got caught I had to write lines. I must speak English. I must speak English.
> (Norma)

> At school we weren't allowed to speak Spanish. I had to learn English. If you got caught you would get in trouble- couldn't get recess, had to stand in the corner. I don't know if it was right but it worked. We learned English.
> (Eduardo)

> My language (Spanish) was my handicap. That's why I couldn't spell because I didn't know what I was reading or writing. Well, it was only here in Colorado Springs. Back home (New Mexico) it wasn't like that you know. It was, as a matter of fact, there wasn't even a white teacher. They were all Mexican/Spanish speaking teachers.
> (Patricia)

> My mom grew up speaking nothing but Spanish until they got into school and then they had no choice but to learn English. So they went to a special class to learn English and then that's when they came home and they started speaking English. They stopped speaking the language.
> (Gloria)

Jose reported that he and his brothers were the only Mexicans in the school they attended. All other students were Anglos. As a result of his mother's attitude about

English, "mom thought we should get in the flow and learn English, it would be easier for us" her sons spoke English. Nevertheless, this man recalled being ignored and not noticed by teachers. His assessment of the situation determined it was based on his race. Individual's defense of their culture does not mean that they do not want to succeed in the dominant culture. Rather they seek an additive rather than a subtractive educational context where their language and culture is not replaced with another.

Discussion

The educational practices of inappropriate teacher attitudes and behaviors, academic discrimination, and lack of cultural respect as described in this study are detrimental not only in the short term through lack of skill development but for the long term as well regarding self esteem and intercultural trust. Some teachers and policy makers describe these individuals as "drop outs" but it may be more appropriate to call them "jump outs" based on their efforts to secure a safe environment for themselves to learn while attempting to obtain English literacy skills and a high school credential.

Racial prejudice as described by these individuals documents the historical contexts of their past educational experiences. The making of meaning, or knowledge production, is informed by these social conditions and the subsequent actions they engage in are utilized to fight oppression. Walking away from situations that are not life affirming suggest individuals have monitored both the social interactions of the situations and their own conduct.

As adults, their perceptions and the decisions they make regarding further actions to meet their educational needs are influenced by these past experiences as well as by their own responses to the discriminatory practices.

CHAPTER 4

ACTION TAKEN TO MEET EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

> A tactical choice born of a prudent awareness of the balance of power (Scott, 1990, p. 183).

This chapter presents the actions taken by individuals as they pursue their educational needs and desires and the factors that have influenced those actions. Also presented are data pertaining to the reasons people are interested in continued learning and education in order to present a grounding for the individual actions.

A typology of strategies depicting the responses individuals created to counter their marginal status within the dominant culture and to attain economic and social equality was developed based on the themes that emerged from the individual texts. The criterion used in drawing up the classification is the manner in which the individual related to the dominant discourse. The two polar possibilities are acts of refusal to engage in the mainstream culture, at one extreme, and the creation of learning opportunities at the other. Between these two are a variety of other strategies of resistance and production. One finding of this study revealed the large number of individuals who have engaged in adult education programs in the past as a strategy which challenges their subordinate group status. It is worth noting, however, that none of the study participants are currently enrolled in such programs.

Why Persist?

People perceive an advantage to having certain skills both academic and vocational. The specific reasons given often vary. In this study three themes emerged from participant stories including the following: (1) to get better jobs, or the instrumental use; (2) to build self esteem, and (3) to affirm one's identity.

The instrumental importance of an education is well embedded in the dominant cultural discourse through promotion of national competition and the need for new or higher level skills. While a number of people in the study believe higher level skills will get them a better job, there were varying degrees of trust that the dominant enterprise of education will, in fact, do that. For some, there is a degree of hope that better skills will lead them out of the aches and pains of manual labor.

Building self esteem, as a categorical reason for wanting higher level skills recognizes the toll that educational exclusion and discrimination has had on one's self concept. Individuals voicing these desires recall repeated incidents of "put downs" and challenges to their academic abilities by teachers, administrators, and peers. Perceived notions of being less than someone else, and settling for something less than what one wanted or desired are evident in study participant texts.

Affirmations of identity was the third category that emerged from participant texts. Images of courage and stamina were depicted through phrases and words like "put up with" and "sticking it out".

All of the individuals in this study left school prior to completing requirements for a high school diploma or in some cases prior to achieving basic English literacy skills of reading and writing. Reasons cited for leaving school included the following:

* lack of care on the part of teachers and administrators
* breakdown of trust between teacher and student

* measures and mechanisms used for control

* lack of quality in educational programs and settings

These men and women can be considered undereducated as well as unserved by the dominant educational system. By their own descriptions they indicate educational needs in specific literacy areas such as reading comprehension, spelling, pronunciation of certain words, writing skills and math. There were also some who desire vocational skill training but see their low academic skills as stumbling blocks. There were others who focus on the "piece of paper" more so than the level of skills they may or may not have. Included in people's testimonies are statements of desires to upgrade skills, regret at not "sticking it out" and determinations to reach certain goals.

> I probably can get where I want to if I want to now. Then again, I'll never become manager or an owner of a business. I've seen some Hispanic women on TV that have gotten all the way up there, but I'm not sure. It's a real hard thing to do but my opportunities are whatever I make of them. If I can deal with the way some people think your class or culture is or not that's something I would have to deal with and they would have to deal with as well. That's basically it.
> (Cecilia)

The tensions and contradictions evident in the above statement represent the constraints and dilemmas Chicano/as attempt to deal with as they confront the realities of their lives. If in fact, "opportunities are whatever I make of them" then a statement by another respondent, Patricia, reminding us of the difficulty of getting an education if one is a Chicana might not carry the weight that it does.

For some, anger at opportunities taken from them is evident in their stories. Olivia tells of the numerous manual labor jobs she must take as a result of not completing school whereas she wanted to have a professional career.

> There's so many intelligent Chicano people and why are they not up there doing the same thing? Just like myself-I could have been up there doing a lot of this stuff but because I didn't have that little piece of paper, they took that away from me. I wanted to do something like teaching or counseling.
> (Olivia)

The action one takes as a response to historical and contemporary experiences of struggle, discrimination and difference can take may forms. People were asked to document the efforts they made as adults to reach their self identified educational goals.

Cultural Action

Cultural action is a phrase coined by Paulo Freire (1985) to describe the actions taken by people when they realize they have been exploited and subordinated to an inferior status, when they realize they deserve more, and when they demand justice. As knowledgeable actors people assert themselves through strategic action to advance their own interests.

The level of knowing can vary but coming to know is based on reflecting on one's own life history and the history of the group. The individuals in this study walked away from educational institutions they found to be unsafe, inferior, and uncaring. As adults their educational needs and desires persist and the majority of people in this study used a range of actions to try and meet those unmet needs. Individuals recount efforts of looking for alternatives where too few choices exist.

Practices of Resistance and Production

Strategies of resistance and production indicate a range of action moving along a continuum from an almost total refusal of buy-in to the dominant discourse of educational credentials and skills to the opposite end of creating opportunities to learn self identified and other identified skills and abilities. The kinds of responses illustrated here are not exhaustive or mutually exclusive. Individuals employed a number of responses or strategies, either simultaneously or successively over the course of adulthood.

Table 4.1

Strategies of Resistance and Production

Acts of Refusal	Avoidance	Alternatives	Preferences	Opportunities to learn

Acts of Refusal

When asked about efforts to upgrade skills several individuals indicated they had never thought about enrolling in adult education programs to meet the need of improving academic or vocational skills and had no desire to participate in any type of educational program. Several different dimensions were identified in this group of actions. Typical of this type of resistance was a reliance on cultural roles, i.e. "I never needed to go back to school. My husband always worked and I raised our daughter. She's older now and left the house but now I'm taking care of my grandmother. I just never thought about it" (Cristina). Cristina described herself as being able to read and write well enough for her purposes although she indicated she was still uncomfortable with math. She definitively stated she was not interested in academics.

One woman, Juanita, who worked in a drug store for 17 years expressed another perspective indicative of this resisting practice. "I have no interest in school or anything like that. I worked for the drug store 17 years. I don't need a GED or high school diploma. If you do a good job it doesn't seem like it should make any difference" (Juanita).

A longing for justice, to be judged by who one is and the job one does was also reflected in these comments by men who have jobs, albeit not necessarily the jobs they want.

> I know enough to do my job. I'm always there. I help the Mexican customers. There's no reason for me to get a GED. If they would put me in road sales maybe but I don't want to sit in school anyway.
> (Tony)

> Having a diploma really don't have nothing to do with it. You have to first build your reputation and, you know, I'm a upright guy I'm trying to keep my life together here. It has to do with your attitude and your personality.
> (Carlos)

Both men indicate lack of need as well as lack of desire to give the educational enterprise another chance. Jose's perspective added another dimension to acts of refusal as a strategy to challenge the marginal educational status and the dominant cultural values system. Along with recognition of the discrimination he has experienced is a sense of anger and a subsequent response of almost total refusal.

> I always had cheap paying jobs, nothing that was going to get me anywhere. The opportunities weren't there after dropping out. A diploma wouldn't help though. Most employers like to give the jobs to the Anglos first.
> (Jose)

Supportive of Jose's perspective is Maria's refusal to engage in adult education programs even though she cannot read or write English and she is aware of programs in her local community. She remembers experiences of humiliation at the hands of Anglos, ridiculing her for her broken English. Prior to the days of knowing much English she was sure people were talking about her making her feel incompetent and stupid.

Maria's refusal to take advantage of educational services for which she is eligible sustains her inability to move around comfortably in her community. At the same time, however, monitoring her environment she relies on the literacy skills of others. She has the store clerk write out her grocery check feigning she forgot her glasses at home. Nevertheless, her testimony documents her struggle, at one point saying "I can't do it. I can't read. Help me." The contradictions of Maria's conflicting perspective and actions indicate some degree of control over her life, however, the consequences continue to limit her choices.

Acts of refusal to engage in adult education programs were characterized by multiple perspectives including a reliance on cultural roles, the belief that one's economic worth should not be defined by one's educational level, and by the knowledge that the color of one's skin means more than a "piece of paper". Perspectives based on past experiences, beliefs about what is right and just, and lived values informed by history and culture which all lead to action supports the notion that action is situated in time and space as a continuous flow of conduct.

Avoidance

Proceeding across the continuum is the category of avoidance as a strategy of resistance. Avoidance suggests staying away from a place that is unpleasant, uncomfortable, even racist. Numerous individuals spoke of staying away from certain programs within the community citing unhelpful teachers, uncaring environments, high costs, and boring programs.

Avoidance begins to uncover the fact that a majority of people in this study have participated in adult education programs in the past. Since none of the individuals were enrolled in programs while participating in this study it suggests that individuals found adult education programs that they had participated in to be unsatisfactory. People who enroll in programs but leave prior to completing are often considered drop outs of adult education. Another view suggests individuals walk away from learning situations that are not supportive of their educational goals and cultural values.

Word of mouth is a reliable tool that people use in making decisions and, in fact, is sought out when trying to locate educational services. Typical of the notion of avoidance are statements of hesitation informed by previous experiences of ineffective teaching and unmet expectations.

> I don't know, like now. I really don't know how I feel if someone was to tell me, hey, you know, there's this class you can come and take it. The majority of the girls there are white but there'll be a few Spanish girls in there or I just go and find that out, I don't know.
> (Olivia)

> You're supposed to train us and teach us. You know I wanted that certificate 10 years ago. I probably would have gone back to school but see there again it happened the same way. Nobody wanted to take the time even after all these years. So I haven't changed my mind. I still feel, to a certain degree, cheated-but you know how I can make up for it is, it will never happen to my kids.
> (Olivia).

Olivia's sense of being cheated in the past impacts decisions in the present. Her uncertainty about educational opportunities today are over shadowed by her unmet expectations in the teaching-learning exchange of the past. As evidenced in her story, Olivia's anger at losing out embedded in educational experiences including lack of cultural respect by teachers and peers, academic discrimination related to her Spanish literacy and low level English skills, and struggles to get quality education for her children coalesce in her hesitation and ultimate reluctance to engage in adult education programs.

A large number of study participants indicated hesitation in following through on thoughts and longings to upgrade their skills. Several comments suggestive of a "wait and see" stance were evidenced. "I'd have to see what it would be like" (Roberto), "It depends on who the people are" (Eduardo).

> I'd have to go back so far I don't want to anymore. See I can't just jump in where I want now. Why can't I just take a few classes in what I'm good at? Why do I have to back track all the way to where they want me to get a GED?
> (Sylvia)

Elena related her experiences of an adult education program that was not supportive of her educational agenda. "I lost interest in the class I was in. They gave you a book, said, do this and put you in a corner and put you on your own. They acted as if we weren't even there." Tied to the lack of assistance Elena felt she wanted is also the notion of being made to feel invisible. She indicated that she would have to think about whether or not she would attend another program in the future.

> I don't know. I know I won't go back there. It was a waste of my time because I like to get some help. I haven't thought about finding another program.
> (Elena)

Lack of assistance in adult education programs was documented in numerous accounts. Likewise, there were many accounts of discriminating comments and actions by adult educators. One example was shared by Olivia who recounted an adult education class experience.

> I got frustrated in one class and the teacher said, You Chicanos are known for being hot tempered people. I go, you never seen a white lady mad or a black woman? What are you trying to throw at me? Most of the Chicana women only went for about three weeks. (Olivia)

Avoidance as a resisting practice ensures protection of one's cultural identity and beliefs about oneself. Affirmation of identity has not been the experience of the individuals in this study in educational institutions, as documented in both youth experiences and adult education experiences. Hesitation based on past discriminatory encounters, a wait and see attitude and disappointment in the teaching learning exchange of adult efforts indicate adults who have not found the supportive environment to meet their educational needs.

Based on individual stories in this study, it was documented that over three quarters of the respondents reported past efforts (sometimes repeated efforts) to upgrade or improve academic and vocational skills (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of reported experiences in adult education programs) as a strategy of resistance to accommodating themselves to Anglo beliefs that they are academically unsuccessful adults.

As a counter to being cheated out of an education and made to feel less than others through challenges by teachers and administrators concerning their academic abilities, individuals reported extensive efforts to get what they need in order to succeed.

There were numerous accounts of exclusion, marginalization, lack of care and unfulfilled learning expectations. Patricia reflected that "this was the first time I've really contemplated how hard it is to get an education." As a strategy of resistance to the status quo, however, they continue to walk away from programs due to expectations of finding quality, caring adult programs.

Alternatives

Finding alternatives as a strategy of resistance takes the form of looking at and trying out various educational options that might assist individuals in reaching their educational goals. Programs that are discriminatory and unsatisfactory are countered by walking away and looking for alternatives. The knowledge people have about their needs and available options prompts some to keep searching for programs of instructional quality and human, intercultural, respect.

Exploring options and searching for quality adult education programs suggest people are looking for a fit between their needs and desires for both education and cultural identity. Alternatives described by people include considerations of compatible philosophies of education and human interaction.

Carlos views academic credentials as required criteria for securing a good job. He recounted his repeated attempts to secure enough credits to graduate from high school prior to reaching the age of 21, the official cutoff age for serving individuals under secondary education funding. Having left school at the age of 16 because of trouble making and discriminatory practices at the school, he went to three other programs but subsequently left each one. He attended the district alternative high school, moved to another town 150 miles away and attended an adult night school completion program and, finally, returned to his hometown community to attend another high school within his local school distinct. At the age of 21 he had not completed school and he reported "I liked going to school, it's just the way I got treated a lot of times. I didn't get the respect from people. I was ignored a lot of the time, so I didn't give them the respect. The jocks got all the attention. Other students they put down." In his late twenties without a diploma he has taken a different approach. His strategy to deal with his uncompleted education was to focus on proving one's self by character versus educational credentials. An alternative strategy to resisting the dominant discourse, that equates success with a degree, was through developing one's character. There is a level of knowing, however, in his recognition that in the end a diploma does not guarantee getting a good job.

> They like somebody with an education. A lot of places you can't get a job if you don't have a diploma or anything. It's just hard. Sometimes I've filled out on job applications that yeah I do have a high school. I've filled that out for better chances but I guess that really don't have nothing to do with it. I guess it has to do with your attitude.
> (Carlos)

Angelina's search for a good job through educational advancement is similar to Carlos. During the twenty five years since she left school at the age of 16 Angelina had attended three different adult eduction programs. Each program had differing characteristics. One program housed at a local church was staffed by volunteers and located in her local community, another was a large adult vocational center in the downtown area of her city, and the third was an adult night program in an elementary school. Relating her experience at the night program where she wanted to work on basic skills she said.

> I want a good job where I can make money and I don't have to work hard. So I've gone back a few times but I never liked the programs. You'd go to them for help and they wouldn't tell you how to figure it out or nothing. You figure it out yourself. I mean there are rude people and everything over there. I just forgot about school.
> (Angelina)

She also reported starting a program in computers and got a certificate but was never able to use it.

> I don't remember the year but I went and got a certificate for MS-DOS. It was like maybe 7 or 8 years ago but I don't even know anything about it now. They said I would get a job with the training but I never did.
> (Angelina)

In addition to how one is treated, the curriculum was a consideration in people's decisions about sticking with a particular program. Sandra related her frustration with programs that would not let her study the things she wanted.

> I knew I needed math, that was OK but I wanted to learn more about how to put together business letters. They would just give me this stuff about writing answers to questions. It was like I had to do it their way. They didn't seem interested in what I needed to learn.
> (Sandra)

Individuals in this study identified curriculum content, knowledge areas, that they wanted to learn. As self directed adult learners they are interested in building and creating knowledge not necessarily accumulating credentials. This sentiment was evidenced in comments like Olivia's "why can't I take what I want rather than starting all the way back to get the GED?" She preferred studying counseling and feels restricted and shut out of community college programs. The linear sequencing of credentialed degree programs does not fit her needs.

Alternative types of programs mentioned by study participants included community based programs in community centers, churches, a women's center and others located in local Chicano/a communities; adult night programs in public school facilities; adult basic education, GED and vocational programs at community colleges programs; and one-on-one tutoring in the home.

Looking at alternatives, then, as a strategy to meet educational needs encompasses finding a match between philosophies and values of respect for the learner as knowledgeable agents in identifying their own needs and desires. It also signifies that there are standards of quality and intercultural interactions that individuals use as criterion in selecting certain programs that they will participate in over others that fall short of their standards. Finally, other alternatives, such as a reliance on one's character can be viewed as a strategy of both resistance and production of meaning.

Preferences

Preferences as a strategy of resistance and production suggests the search for programs with particular features that are preferred over other features. As individuals reflected on the limited available choices in furthering education for themselves, numerous statements regarding preference in terms of programs were noted. Themes of care, assistance and respect emerged from these collected statements. Focusing these themes into operational categories the notions of tools and philosophies were developed. Preferences in philosophies included two categories: teachers attitudes and pedagogy.

Preferences in educational tools contained references to instructional format, attendance policies, costs, materials, and location and safety issues.

Philosophical preferences in teacher attitudes reflected issues of cultural respect. The concern with teacher attitudes was well documented in the texts of study participants. The teacher held a central place in all recollections of past experiences, whether at the adult or youth level, and was the predominant concern in the consideration of potential programs that might be considered. Two variations of this concern are voiced below.

> Some teachers are so bad. As a kid you have no choice.
> If it's that bad now I leave.
> (Eduardo)

> I wouldn't worry about teachers now as an adult.
> (Margaret)

The concerns individuals have about teacher attitudes include beliefs they hold about adults as knowledgeable agents in the pursuit of their own learning, false beliefs regarding Chicano/as and other Spanish speaking groups, and biases including racism that are often exhibited by not only teachers but administrators of adult programs as well.

Many individuals in this study voiced a desire for instructors who care about them and the lives they live. Reuben, Patricia, Elena, Jose and many others look for teachers who care about individuals, especially those like themselves, people from other racial and class groups. "They have to want to spend time to help people, they have to communicate more, they have to give people recognition" (Jose).

Philosophical preferences in pedagogy spotlight the importance of the adult as learner. Learning as a social process where people work together to gain and create knowledge is preferred to individualized, competitive, and isolated learning which are reasons for leaving programs. Part of this notion focuses on the agenda and the style of the student over the agenda and the style of the teacher. Individuals reported teachers teaching to their preferences rather than student preferences.

Education for the purpose of gaining skills was noted. People resist programs which do not reflect their interests and backgrounds and which do not acknowledge and build on the skills individuals bring with them to the classroom including social participation in communities and families, bilingual or biliteracy resources, and critical thinking skills used in everyday life situations.

There was a desire expressed for teachers who are knowledgeable and skillful at teaching. Individuals believe teachers should teach using knowledge of how adults in various cultures learn. There is also an expectation that since teachers are the ones who have the information they have a responsibility to share and transmit that knowledge. "Educated people have to want to give more" (Jose) The teaching-learning exchange is an important factor in meeting educational needs.

Preferences in educational tools include items ranging from instructional format to location and safety issues. There appears to be a great deal of concern with individualized instruction and being left on one's own to figure things out. People recognize that the instructional format as a tool to learning is more effective when knowledge and skills are shared. Being left to work on one's own creates time delays and reinforces the sense of marginalization. People complained of programs that waste their time.

Attendance policies and issues of absences or "recycling of students" as one study participant named it are not helpful in building relationships of trust, an important issue as documented from educational youth experiences. Adult programs which put heavy demands on attendance with penalties for a certain number of absences are not helpful to individuals who are trying to further their education. The ideology of these programs does not recognize the realities and commitments of everyday life.

Costs were brought up by several people. Statements centered on discriminatory practices of social programs that pay for books and expenses for welfare recipients, at risk youth as well as people entering college who get scholarships or financial aid. Costs were also referred to in reference to changing class levels, moving from level 3 to 4 for example, which requires different books and additional costs.

Cristina related her concern that she had to pay for books and programs she had attended at one time, while she was aware that indiviudals who were on welfare and some younger adults who lived at a residential treatment center were allowed to attend free. "And us we were paying more, we really wanted this. Why did we have to pay because we really wanted this?" (Ana).

Instructional materials used in most programs are not culturally sensitive or they depict adult basic education students as lazy, in prison, on welfare, in court, having problems with parenting, generally unable to cope with life. Values depicted and taught in a lot of program materials were viewed as "not our values." Some people asked for materials which would teach them about their histories.

Finally, location and safety issues were identified as reasons for not attending certain programs. Some indiviudals who live in dangerous neighborhoods will not go out at night, while others identified specific neighborhoods they would not go to. Several women also expressed preferences for programs which were easily accessible due to lack of transportation.

The preferences of individuals in this study suggest critical factors that are taken into account in the selection of programs. Generally, there was a potential interest in programs where individuals are treated with respect and regard and where their educational needs as identified by them are met in an environment of care.

Creating Opportunities for Learning

Individual and group preferences as reported by the study participants involve notions of care and assistance. As people resist the marginalization and otherness created bu the dominant discourse of being "undereducated", the individuals in this study reported creative and varied approaches to creating opportunities for self directed learning. In addition to themes of care and assistance, the notion of opportunity in everyday life was identified in people's efforts. There was a general sense that people found ways to convert the resources they had in order to take control of their lives and meet some of their own needs within a limited range of choice.

Relying on the help and assistance of others was evidenced in numerous accounts. One woman, Maria, talked of her strategies for learning English. As a youth she listened very carefully to Anglos she encountered at the local grocery store and other public locations. Although she did not attend school, she practiced English with her brothers and sisters who did go. As a young adult, her husband read English language comic books, she made friends with Anglo farmhands and ventured along with her husband on his trips to town. "I had new friends. I was the farmer's lady and I used to go over there to the house parties. I made them understand and they did too. I learned how to talk English. I learned by seeing and asking questions and everything. I do everything I want to now. I somehow know everything I need to know" (Maria). In public places she asks for assistance from whomever is available by making apologies for leaving her glasses at home. As an older adult, her children, in particular her daughter, assist her with mail and paying bills. She reciprocates by teaching her grandchildren Spanish.

> We talk a lot of Spanish and I try to talk to my grandkids in Spanish. I talk to them in Spanish and they answer me in English but they understand me. I want them to learn Spanish.
>
> (Maria)

Other individuals reported getting assistance from friends or relatives with learning or improving their Spanish language skills. "It's embarrassing when someone starts talking to you in Spanish and they assume I understand everything they're saying so I asked one of my friends to teach me" (Regina). "My mother knows more Spanish than I do so when I visit her now we speak some Spanish so I can brush up on it" (Ana).

Additional examples of informal learning are documented through reading and study projects including reading all the time at home, researching one's own family history by drawing up a family tree, volunteering in a nephew's pre-school program, learning and trying out family recipes passed down through multiple generations and investigating educational options for one's children.

One woman who participate in this study was first interviewed in a community center while she was waiting for one of the center's assistants to type up a legal letter for her regarding an unemployment claim. Judith had written out what she wanted to be in the letter and the woman assisting her typed it up correcting the spelling and grammar and putting it in the appropriate format. Judith's reliance on another person's skills to complement her own skills and knowledge can be seen as affirming a community of assistance which appears to be a strong value in the Chicano/a community.

In addition to examples of informal learning and helping each other, individual texts document numerous examples of on the job training. One woman, Gloria, reported she learned how to do a job she wanted at a factory she worked at. She knew it required a college credential but since she had neither that nor a high school credential she had a friend teach her everything about the quality control position she wanted. When she felt confident about her level of knowledge and skill and an opening was available she requested a transfer upgrade which she successfully accomplished.

Eduardo reported he had welding skills but did not know how to read blueprints so he sought opportunities to learn little by little until he reached a level of expertise that he could market his skills. Numerous examples exist in the stories of study participants. In all examples, individuals created opportunities by taking advantage of the situation they found themselves in.

Discussion

A typology that positions strategic action taken by educationally unserved adults in the pursuit of satisfying educational needs and desires was developed. A continuum of activities used to resist the dominant discourse of what it means to be part of the undereducated "minority" population supports a view of people as knowing actors who have the power to intervene in life events. Knowledge and reflection on that knowing, based on past and contemporary experiences which demean and devalue culture and identity, are used to inform subsequent actions. People have the power to intervene through strategic conduct in life events and to alter their course.

While challenging the dominant discourse which defines undereducated and unserved adults as incompetent, stupid, and outsiders people create and utilize a range of strategies of resistance and production of meaning. These strategies, or practices, are both informed by and influence social experiences. Individuals counter discriminatory practices by relying on values preferred by the Chicano/a culture: values of ethical care, assistance, and understanding.

Contradictions are evident in some of the strategies employed. Although rejected by and rejecting of the dominant school system it was found that a majority of the individuals have attempted to use traditional adult education programs to further their educational goals. These educational agencies have pushed people to the margins once again by their discriminatory and exclusionary practices which ensure that the status quo is maintained.

Acts of refusal reject, almost totally, dominant cultural values yet in the end are supportive of the mainstream by limiting available options for economic and social mobility. It is only through continual experimentation and creation of opportunities that affirm one's cultural identity, that people can oppose oppression and thus open the possibility of transforming reality.

Resisting practices are efforts to sustain cultural identity and represent persistence in reaching one's goals. Not only do individuals perceive their educational needs but they exhibit a continuing interest in learning as self directed learners. Noninvolvement in traditional adult basic education and English literacy programs should be seen as resistance to educational practices of exclusion, marginality, and cultural disregard for Chicano/as, in particular, and people of color, in general.

CHAPTER 5

ADULT EDUCATION EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

> Consider this: if someone knows something but cannot gain the agreement of anyone else at all, the product of that knowing has not been called knowledge and may well be suspected to be the product of madness-even if perhaps inspired madness. Similarly, if a nonlegitimate group knows something and makes claims for its general validity, what is known is easily written off as prejudice, merely experiential, biased or ignorant by the legitimate authorities.
> (Kamarck Minnich, 1990, p.151).

Efforts to Return to School

Literacy practioners and policymakers often believe that those individuals who are not engaged in formalized adult programs have a low perception of their educational needs. The educational histories of the individuals in this study were examined including educational activities engaged in as adults. Some of the findings indicate that assumptions regarding people's interest in adult education programs may be erroneous. This study found a majority of individuals indicated efforts of returning to school to upgrade academic and vocational skills.

Notions of voluntary participation as well as concepts of "dropout" of adult basic education gives the appearance that people do not want to participate in programs. Such a stance ignores and masks the underlying problems with mainstream adult programs and the ideology which guides and maintains them.

This chapter examines the types of adult education programs that study participants had attended in the past followed by their perceptions of their experiences in those programs. A comparison of the similarities between educational experiences as youth and as adults is then presented. Over 75% of the individuals in this study have participated in either adult basic education and English literacy programs or high school completion programs.

Improving Skills

Questions regarding efforts to return to school for the purpose of upgrading academic skills was not initially included in the interview guide. During the first interview, conducted with a woman who had attended elementary school only sporadically and never went back after the age of ten, the informant discussed her frustrating attempts to learn English. Here was a woman, with very little formal education, having grown up in the farm fields of eastern Colorado, who indicated numerous efforts to learn English literacy skills-speaking, reading and writing. Her husband read English language comic books to her, she listened to farmhands speak English, and she had reading assistance, one-on-one, several times.

> A woman from church from old Mexico came to my house once a week to teach me reading. She helped sound out words but I needed more help. I wished she would come every day because it was so hard for me. She would leave and I wouldn't know what to do. I don't want to go to school. The English I know I learned on my own and from my husband reading comic books to me. I never did go to school much as a girl.
> (Maria)

She had been referred to me by her daughter-in-law who was enrolled in an adult basic education program at the time of the study and she spoke of her adult children having attended various adult programs yet she was not interested in attending traditional programs for which she was clearly eligible. Learning about one woman's attempt to improve her English literacy skills prompted questioning people about similar efforts of educational activity as adults.

Subsequent questioning of study participants found the majority (over 75%) of individuals in this study had participated in past efforts (sometimes repeated efforts) to upgrade or improve academic and vocational skills by attending various types of adult education programs (see table 5.1). Almost half of this group indicated they had attended adult basic education or GED type programs. Another 13% reported efforts to complete high school after leaving at some previous time. Some individuals had started more than one program of the same type, i.e. ABE programs at several different locations, or had enrolled in different types of programs at different times, i.e. ABE programs and vocational or recreational programs. The funding structures of these programs also varied. People talked about attending programs at elementary and high schools, community colleges, private schools, churches, community based organizations, and receiving one-on-one tutoring.

Table 5.1

Efforts to Return to School

	ABE-Literacy	High school completion	Vocational education	Recreational courses
Women	11	3	5	3
Men	3	1	3	0

* Four respondents indicated participating in more than one type of program.

Some of the people who spoke about enrollment in adult basic education or English literacy programs also indicated an interest in pre-GED preparation. No one spoke of taking any GED tests or preparing for such tests, however. A concern was expressed by a few individuals regarding the "worth" of GED certificates. As one young man said, "I don't know if employers really think a GED is as good as a high school diploma" (Roberto).

The high school efforts discussed included attendance at alternative schools or returns to the home high school after being out at least one semester. One individual told of repeated efforts between the ages of 16 and 21 to complete high school credits including moving to another city many miles away and attending different schools within the same district.

Three of the individuals who attended vocational programs completed certified training in welding, barbering and word processing. Several reached their goals of completing specific courses such as CPR or a computer course required for job situations.

Recreational courses engaged in included ethnic cooking and home decorating.

Adult Education Experiences

A large number of those who reported past efforts to return to school said they had made several attempts. While these repeated efforts might indicate people are looking for an appropriate fit between their desires and what programs offer, their comments and stories would indicate there is more than a question of a "comfortable fit".

In recounting the concrete situations, the details of lived experiences, several themes emerged from individual texts including intercultural understanding, teacher attitudes, pedagogy, curriculum, the teaching-learning exchange and peers. Refocusing these into a broader lens three final categories were identified. These categories were marginalization, learning expectations and intercultural understanding. The study participant's language was then analyzed for imagery relating to their marginalized position within the learning environment. This discourse analysis yielded these further themes: invisibility, lack of care, struggle, difference, subordination and exclusion.

To generate individual insights into the dynamics of their educational experiences as adults, individuals were asked to reflect on a series of questions about their experiences as Hispanics in the various learning environments in which they had participated.

Marginalization

Based on previous educational experiences as adults, the study participants described what it feels like to exist on the social and academic margins. Three dimensions, exclusion, invisibility, and inferior status were described. Feelings of exclusion were expressed in relation to other students and the teachers. Invisibility has to do with a lack of care and attention on the part of the teacher. Finally, a sense of inferior status was conveyed by comments and attitudes about the learning environment.

Adults convey their sense of exclusion and isolation by such phrases as "pushed away", "didn't care", "walked away" and "figure it out". One woman talking about a reading and writing program she had attended several years previous described one of the reasons for her frustration in not making any headway in her program.

> I wasn't getting any help. I didn't understand what I was studying but I more or less, kind of, had to do it on my own, just study up on what I thought was best. (Sandra)

Her sense of being left on her own heightened her isolation from the help she wanted and needed in order to learn. The subtext of her statement also reflected feelings of neglect and lack of care. A sense of wanting to be a part of the learning group was expressed by Ana who questioned the teaching strategy she encountered in an adult lab program. This idea of isolated learning separated from both teacher and peers presents the reality of self-paced individualized learning situations.

> It was hard, they just give you a book and say-here do it. I like sometimes for somebody to go over it with me. I didn't even know what I was doing sometimes. I go how do you do this? How do you do this?
> (Ana)

Exclusion as felt by Elena had the quality of not being chosen, being left out. Describing a group lesson about differences between writing styles and her difficulty in understanding the lesson, Elena concluded "she (the teacher) was going to choose who she was going to get the message across to and it wasn't us".

Images of invisibility were conveyed by adults as a lack of care. One man indicated "nobody seemed to notice if I was there or not. The teachers didn't seem to care"(Eduardo). Comparing the community center where she was attending a social event one woman said, "the community center here cares and encourages us. They understand the lives we live. I didn't have that in the education program I went to" (Juanita). The importance of a community of care and assistance was a major thread in the individual texts of study participants whether in describing their everyday lives or as an element that was missing in educational situations.

Judith's description of an adult learning experience indicates her lack of interest and enthusiasm for situations that make her feel invisible.

> I lost interest in the class I was in. They gave you a book,
> said, do this and put you in a corner and put you on your own.
> They acted as if we weren't even there.
> (Judith)

The third dimension of marginality, inferior status also conveyed a sense of anger and justified indignation. The sense of being told one is inferior was experienced through both comments and actions of teachers and peers. Speaking about peer attitudes of non-Hispanic students one woman stated:

> They're the ones that made me feel inferior to them because
> a lot of them (Anglos) were making it. I don't know, like now,
> how I would feel if someone was to tell me hey-you know, there's
> this class you can come and take. The majority of the girls
> are white but there'll be, you know, a few Spanish girls in
> there.
> (Olivia)

Olivia's reticence to give a program a chance appears to be impaired due to her past adult experiences of humiliation and remembered pain. Bertha described her experiences with discrimination and struggle in the following way.

> The class lasted eight weeks and most of us were all out
> of there by the third day because everybody was so discouraged,
> so messed up. From the very first day she kept saying this,
> like, "Let's see, how can I get through to your kind of
> people". She didn't come out and tell us "it's you brown
> people" but she could sure say it another way and it meant
> the same thing.
> (Bertha)

Not only bias, but actual racism, is part of the educational reality encountered by individuals in this study as they attempt to engage in efforts of skill upgrade and learning.

Learning Expectations

Learner expectations about the educational environment extend beyond how Chicano/a individuals are treated by teachers and peers yet are influenced very specifically by their perceptions of teacher and peer behavior. For these individuals the endeavor of learning is serious business and people have expectations about the conditions and atmosphere that ought to exist. Several dimensions were evidenced in their critique of programs they had participated in such as classroom environment, program organization, and the teaching-learning exchange.

Cecilia's ideas about the classroom environment pointed to not only what she finds to be a conducive environment for learning but also exhibited her attitudes about other learners as well as the role of teachers. Talking about the classroom environment she put it this way.

> The people that were there weren't interested. They were just there messing around and making people laugh. You really couldn't get into it. The teachers didn't make them calm down or anything. (Cecilia)

For Cecilia to feel comfortable that she will profit from her efforts, certain criteria within the environment will need to be present. Questioning the lack of seriousness and organization in another program Patricia's experience suggests that the level of quality that exists in some adult education programs does not meet learner expectations.

> They don't keep up with you. I know they have a lot of work but we students always had to keep bugging them and bugging them. Half the time they don't know where your records are. It seems to be hard for them. When

> you first go in to register they kinda like don't know where to put you and after you're done filling out all that paperwork-they've lost you. And by that time you don't want to really go through all this.
> (Patricia)

Emotionally this disorganization is experienced as demeaning and disrespectful of one's time. Sylvia experienced program confusion and disorganization differently. While a friendly environment may be helpful in making people feel comfortable and welcome, in the end, it is the teacher assistance in a well planned program that some people look for. Sylvia's assessment of the teacher in the following statement creates the image of a friendly but ineffective learning encounter.

> They were friendly but they weren't too helpful because, I don't know, maybe because there was too many people in the classroom or something.
> (Sylvia)

Another central theme that emerged from the data was the concept of sharing knowledge-the exchange of information between teachers and learners. Individuals expect that teachers have a responsibility to teach in a way that they would and could learn. In addition, individuals indicated they expected teachers to share the knowledge they have.

> It was an Anglo lady that directed the whole class. She was the one that offered the program and she made everybody in there feel so stupid. Since she was teaching how are we supposed to know until we've been taught. She should give us an example. First, like she asked us this question and we didn't know the answer so she explained it like in "terms" but didn't give us any examples and nobody's catching on. I stood up and asked her, I says could you give me an example of what you mean? She couldn't or wouldn't saying if she did that she would be giving us the answer.
> (Olivia)

Withholding of information and knowledge contributed to Olivia's feelings of being stupid while at the same time reinforcing the notion that the educational apparatus and, more importantly, the teachers, regulate who learns what, who has access to what knowledge.

Another individual cited a teacher's teaching style that she perceived to interfere with the exchange of information and learning. The centrality of the teacher in the learning environment is pointed out again in the following statement. Sandra's experiences, however, focus on the importance of the learner. There is a sense of being ignored as the learner and needing to fit in to an already defined teaching style.

> It was a group. See she would go to different subjects. I got involved right in the middle of the session or whatever and she was going to algebra when I don't even know division. Well she was already on algebra and she wouldn't stop the class to get back to me. She was on algebra and then went back to fractions and then the next day we were on reading and then the following day we would be on a different subject. It was all mixed up where we were going. That's another reason why I couldn't really get anywhere.
> (Sandra)

Individuals take seriously the notion of teachers teaching. Teachers have an obligation toward the student to share their knowledge in an orderly environment with the needs of the students in mind as evidenced by the individual comments. What people are asking for and expect is a learner centered exchange: "They weren't teaching me anything. They were teaching me the way they wanted not the way that would help me. I never learned to read" (Patricia).

Criticisms of teachers in controlling the learning environment and setting the learning agenda as well as the direct teaching learning exchange reflect a strong desire to learn rather than reflecting a total rejection of the idea of the teacher. Likewise, there is a legitimacy placed on the knowledge that is offered in these adult programs. These particular findings support similar findings of Lois Weiss (1983) in her study of African American community college students who saw teachers knowledge as "not only legitimate but they also envision it as power" (p. 244).

Intercultural Understanding

Cultural pride is a strong theme running throughout the individual texts of this study. It is a way of being, a way of knowing, and a way of belonging. Individuals in this study who had participated in adult programs have had to contend with affronts to their ethnic heritage and backgrounds as they have tried to meet their educational goals. Their sense of difference is questioned rather than valued and images of the "other" created by program mechanisms and structures spotlights their "otherness".

Language is an important, some believe significant, element of cultural identity. None of the individuals in this study were monolingual Spanish; a few were monolingual English. For those individuals who speak both Spanish and English, language is a way to move from one world to the other.

There is continual conflict as people attempt to upgrade their education between what they must give up, or sacrifice, as part of the educational contract and what they can hope to gain. As adults who have been unsuccessful in achieving academic credentials and struggling against the dominant discourse which represents them as outsiders and failures, individuals continue to negotiate their cultural identities and to look for educational experiences that are grounded in justice.

In relation to adult education programs the following statements reflect the conflict these individuals face regarding language and learning. They are told they must forget who they are, remove themselves from the context of their history and their everyday cultural realities.

> They (the teachers) told us to leave our Spanish outside the classroom. I tell my son it's good to speak two languages-bilingual-try to speak your own language not only just English. They shouldn't make us feel bad about our language.
> (Cristina)

> If teachers make me feel uncomfortable about my English I leave. Some teachers are so bad. As a kid you have no choice. If it's that bad now I leave.
> (Eduardo)

Along with language, knowing one's own history creates a sense of place in the larger social world. There is a longing to be present in the curriculum of adult programs. Curriculum which reflects the histories and lives of Chicano/a individuals represents respect for their contributions to history. Omission signifies exclusion and invisibility for many individuals. The absence or omission of inclusion of one's history was pointed out by these comments of Margaret and Jose.

> I wish I knew more about my history, where I come from. If I had been closer to my grandmother I probably would have learned more about my heritage. Now I wish I would have. Why don't they include that in adult courses?
> (Margaret)

> After all this time, we are said to belong to a minority culture. We even see enemies among other Hispanics and this is all because of ignorance and a lack of information about our culture, our plight. (Jose)

Cultural identity is carried around inside and is worn on the outside. Silence regarding one's racial and ethnic identity is perceived as disrespect as evidenced here. Judith's indignation reveals the strength of her convictions and the importance of her culture. Her statement suggests that intercultural understanding is an important criteria in the selection of adult programs.

> We still have the culture, everything about it. You never forget what you are no matter how white the world is. You are a Chicano and that's all there is to it. My ethnic background was pushed aside like I was supposed to forget about it.
> (Judith)

> I would have felt more comfortable with more Chicanos around, because I would have figured they've come from the same background as I have. What makes me uncomfortable is why does it always have to be a white teacher. That's what I don't like.
> (Judith)

As a result of the breakdown in cultural respect Judith has become uncomfortable with the idea of Anglo teachers in programs that serve large numbers of Chicano/as. Being unable to relate to another's background and heritage, one's economic class, or one's gender is seen as a problem.

Olivia related an experience in a racist classroom that she had to contend with as she was pursuing her educational goals. Being defined as different and less than others she resisted the stereotype that the teacher used to represent her. Olivia reported her retort to the teacher's comments, "I got frustrated in one class and the teacher said: You Chicanos are known for being hot tempered people. I go you've never seen a white lady mad or a black woman? What are you trying to throw at me?"

As adults who have participated in adult education programs in the past, these individuals know a great deal about available options in their communities. The experiences of marginalization, unmet learning expectations, and cultural disregard are well documented in the texts of the study participants.

Similarities Between Education Experiences as a Youth and as an Adult

The adult education programs people describe and their experiences there are reminiscent of their childhood experiences, particularly junior high and high school experiences. Three factors as identified in the texts of individual recollections of educational experiences were characterized (see table 5.2). The similarities noted appear to be factors which also influence the efforts of adults as they determine how best to satisfy their educational needs and desires. The three factors listed are: teacher attitudes, academic quality, and cultural respect.

Attitudes of Teachers

Adult education experiences highlighted the attitudes of teachers as a lack of care and attention and again positioned teachers as a central concern. Adult experiences are more graphically documented with particular experiences in mind whereas youth experiences give the sense of a more general, pervasive, lack of care on the part of teachers. The difference in the number of learning encounters would appear to explain some difference as well as time and space factors; adult experiences are more recent.

Table 5.2

Similarities Between Education Experiences as a Youth and as an Adult

Factors	Youth Experiences	Adult Experiences
Teacher Attitudes	Breakdown of trust Lack of care and attention Putdowns Racism Little academic assistance	Lack of care/neglect Invisibility Racism Little academic assistance Exclusion Inferior status
Academic Quality	Tracking into working/lower class jobs Disregard for individual goals Nonchallenging courses Reliance on attendance vs. abilities Educational differentials	Disorganization of programs Withholding of knowledge Poor teaching Disregard for individual goals Knowledgeable agents Isolated learning
Cultural Respect	Discrimination Punishment for speaking Spanish Lack of respect for difference	Discrimination Disregard for first language Subordination of culture

As youth, individuals described teacher attitudes as playing an important role in their academic success. Lack of learning assistance, academic guidance and teaching instruction were voiced as awareness of the difference in attention they got compared to Anglo youth. Adult experiences of insensitive teacher attitudes are emotionally felt as exclusion and marginalization. Teachers walked away from them and exhibited direct racist behavior. As youth experiences, individuals reported feeling that inappropriate teacher attitudes had a similar emotional effect but were described more as a sense of being ignored by teachers.

The breakdown of trust between youth and their teachers appears to have resulted due to teachers not legitimizing the knowledge individuals have about their own lives. Trust as it relates to adult educational experiences was also noted, however, it was categorized as a factor which was taken into account in terms of academic quality.

Both youth experiences and adult experiences record the racism that pervades the lives of these individuals. As adults this is experienced as being put in an inferior status while as youth they remember the putdowns that were used to maintain low self esteem. Generally, teachers in both adult education and youth education exhibited similar ideologies in terms of dealing with these Chicano/a individuals with similar results; individuals walked away from situations that do not affirm cultural identity nor support their educational needs and desires.

Academic Quality

As youth, individuals reported being tracked into lower level classes; none of the people indicated they were on the college track. Their educational goals and desires, as a result, were not taken into consideration and several statements regarding low level courses, extra gym classes, chorus, drama, and home economics were described. In addition to the experiences of being tracked into working and lower class jobs, individuals remembered not getting the same level of service that they saw others getting, especially as it relates to guidance and counseling.

As adults, there were similar reflections within the context of adult responsibilities and commitments. Linear programs starting where one left off were questioned as appropriate for all individuals. Specific course content was challenged as well if it did not meet educational goals. Individuals perceive they know a great deal about their educational needs and desires and many felt there was a general disregard for their perceived goals.

Questioning the quality of academic choices offered to individuals both as youth and as adults indicated that people have an awareness of the limited options that are presented to them. Resisting both the limited range of choices and the poor quality of programs suggests a lack of trust in the dominant educational enterprise.

Attendance issues as played against academic abilities are related by individuals as important in their youth education. Attendance policy is used to exclude individuals from participating in classes and isolates them from the general school population. Isolated, individualized, learning situations as documented by adult education experiences appears to achieve the same result by pushing people to the margins of the learning community.

Individuals reported their adult education experiences as including disorganized programs and poor teaching skills. The impact on people of such disorganization and untrained teachers signifies to them that according to the dominant discourse they do not deserve any better, however, rejecting these programs signals a problem in the type of programs that are offered.

There appears to be general similarities of questionable academic quality in all educational programs whether at the youth level or at the adult level thus indicating a similar resistance to inadequate programs at various stages of one's life.

Cultural Respect

Accounts of discrimination based on race and ethnicity are well documented in the texts of individuals in this study. Lack of respect for differences as identified in people's youth experiences are recounted in adult education programs as a disregard for one's culture. In both cases, there is a general sense that one ought to push cultural identity to one side-or leave it outside the classroom door.

People reported language discrimination in educational experiences as both adults and as youth. The actual form this took varied. Many adults recounted their efforts to learn English and the struggles they confronted including outright punishment. As adult learners, people experience a general disregard for their first language. Punishment is more subtle and takes the form of making people feel uncomfortable about their language. Reports of not speaking Spanish in front of Anglos were recorded as a result of ridicule and witnessed as general disrespect for one's culture.

Other forms of discrimination experienced in adult education programs was a lack of multicultural curriculum that included Chicano/a life histories. Individuals did not criticize the materials that were in the learning centers only that there were not materials that represented their lives. Accounts of youth education included being taught Spanish from a book of stories rather than the everyday contextual conversations of their lives.

The demand for cultural respect in learning encounters suggests that individuals expect intercultural understanding. Likewise, if respect is not present in these learning encounters there is little interest in continued participation.

In summary, the experiences of these adults in both adult education programs and youth education present factors that are taken into account when making decisions about the appropriate actions to take in furthering one's academic skills. Differentials in teacher attitudes, academic quality, and cultural respect restrict total access to educational opportunities.

Discussion

This chapter presented the experiences some individuals in this study have had in various adult education programs. The concrete situations, the details of lived experiences, indicate that some adult education programs do not provide a conducive environment for individuals to learn. It is not to suggest that all adult education programs are the same. There are no doubt examples of better programs as well as worse programs. Compatibility between individual values and dominant educational ideology does seem to be in conflict, however. Individual choices appear restricted if solely focused on traditional programs. Since none of the individuals were enrolled in adult education programs during the course of the study it must be recognized that people did leave programs they found to be inappropriate for them.

Having engaged in adult education programs at some point during adulthood, the image of adults with low level English literacy skills as uninterested in learning must be countered. These are individuals who have walked away from programs that did not meet educational needs nor support their cultural identities.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins by restating the research questions. The findings are then discussed as they relate to the research questions. The implications of this study for the practice of adult education are then presented.

Research Questions

This study focused on the extent to which factors of race, ethnicity, class and/or gender interplay with structural and cultural constraints to influence the decision-making and human agency of native born Mexican Americans of Colorado in contemporary nonparticipating behaviors. The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. What are the historical contexts of education, learning and literacy (Spanish and English) experiences of Mexican American adults?
2. How do individuals describe their efforts to reach their educational goals?
3. How do those experiences influence individual decisions and action taken regarding adult basic education and English literacy programs?

Discussion of the Findings

The thirty individuals who participated in this study demonstrated unique patterns of perceptions and actions. Considered as a whole, however, the findings led to conclusions in respect to the research questions.

Historical Context of Education

In this study the historical contexts of educational experiences of the individual study participants varied greatly. Their educational experiences varied across time and space and they each attained differing levels of education and English literacy skills.

The universal theme that linked these individuals was their difficulty in getting an education. As learners they have shared similiar educational experiences in the form of discrimination, struggle, and difference. The historical context of education, learning and English literacy, as a site of struggle, is representative of other aspects of their lives. Through individual and group oppression and subordination one comes to know a way of being that is outside the mainstream. This knowing is informed by experience and grounded in the real world.

As native Mexican Americans, who can see their own history, the dominat culture strives to assimilate these individuals into the mainstream as it has done since the invasion of their land in 1848. Assimilation, however, strips people of their culture and their language. Individual documentation of struggles over one's first language as experienced in educational institutions and the larger social context have left some individuals in this study full of guilt, shame, and regret. As they reclaim their language, their voice, their identity they use their subjective knowledge to regain their power. There appears to be a strong preference for acculurating one's self and the group into society where cultural identity and difference are allowed rather than accomodating to values that are contrary to Chicano/a values.

Efforts to Reach Educational Goals

All of the individuals in this study left school prior to completing requirements for a high school diploma or in some cases prior to achieving English literacy skills of reading and writing. All of the individuals indicated educational needs in specific literacy areas such as reading comprehension, spelling, pronunciation of certain words, writing skills and math. There were also some who desired vocational skill training but saw their low academic skills as stumbling blocks. Included in people's testimonies were statements of desires to upgrade skills, regret at not "sticking it out" and determination to reach certain goals.

Individuals have the ability to act in pursuit of their own interests and the power to intervene in events to alter their course. Efforts to reach self identified educational needs and desires were found in several strategic actions including:

- attendance in traditional adult education programs of various types
- search for alternative programs, activities, and services
- creation of educational opportunities in everyday life based on an ethic of care and assistance

This action is informed by experiences of exclusion, however, these individuals are not simply victims but knowledgeable actors who are making their own history. As people reject the dominant discourse they act as knowing subjects. The subsequent actions they engage in are utilized to fight oppression. As adults, their perceptions and the decisions they make regarding further actions to meet educational needs are influenced by these past experiences as well as by their own responses to their everyday realities.

Decisions and Actions Influenced by Experiences

As people have tried to fit into the mainstream they are continually rejected. Yet as they resist the dominant discourse which defines them as outsiders they continue to press up against unequal institutional structures that attempt to assimilate them into the dominant society.

Through the reflexive monitoring of social situations and human interactions, individuals in this study developed strategic practices of resistance based on historic and contemporary experiences of exclusion, cultural struggle, and social, economic and political inequalities and by reliance on shared cultural values. Incorporating values of cooperation, shared understanding, and respect, everyday practices reflect attempts to challenge and transform reality. Using the resources they have these individuals took control of their lives in order to challenge and counter their marginal status.

A typology of strategic actions created by individuals to reach their educational goals was developed based on the themes that emerged from the individual texts. Resisting practices which serve to reaffirm identity and attempt to change reality can be thought of as cultural action. People know a great deal about the conditions of social reproduction. Realizing they deserve more they demand justice.

Implications for Practice

Based on findings of this study the following statements can be made:

* Citing discriminating past elementary-secondary school experiences as reasons that people do not enroll in mainstream adult basic education programs masks the discriminatory practices of adult basic education and the choices people make based on those adult experiences. Not only do people experience discrimination in early experiences of schooling but adult education programs as well. As a result of talking

with individuals who are not currently participating in adult programs due to lack of teacher sensitivity, intercultural understanding and quality programs a fuller awareness of the factors that influence nonparticipation can be attained. Further, by listening to the perceptions of these individuals faulty adult education practices which are unconscious and unintended can be discovered and, subsequently, are able to be changed.

* Notions of volunteerism and "drop out" of adult basic education give the appearance that people do not want to participate in programs while ignoring the underlying problems with mainstream programs and the ideology which guides and maintains them. Clearly, the individuals in this study are interested in further and continual learning as evidenced by their efforts and strategies for meeting their educational needs and desires. By focusing on the individual rather than adult education practice maintenance of the status quo is ensured. "The ideology of adult education achieves for practioners a promise to their clientele that their primary concern will be with students' needs and interests" (Keddie, 1980, p. 46) according to middle class values and context as opposed to more meaningful references based on differing cultural, social, and structural locations.

* A multidisciplinary, multicultural approach to educational research with full participation by all racial, ethnic, gender and class groups is required to fully expand the partial knowledge we now have regarding participation, as well as other, issues in adult education. There is a need to acknowledge that people's everyday reality is socially constructed around categories of race, class and gender. As such people live different lives and have different frames of reference in relation to the dominant society which

influence their engagement in social institutions. In order to more fully understand the everyday realities of differing groups the partial knowledge that currently exists must be expanded. Only by going directly to the individuals who we hope to understand can we truly know how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations for the practice of adult education are presented below:

1. Evaluation of adult education programs for multicultural emphasis and curriculum focus that reflects the general population mix.
2. Teacher in-service opportunities for implementing multicultural adult programs using culturally congruent pedagogical techniques.
3. Actively recruit and train people of color for teaching and administrative positions in adult basic education and English literacy
4. Restructure learning environments that foster high quality education
5. Create multicultural/antiracist learner centered systems of program delivery where:
    * multicultural perspectives are integrated into every subject area of the curriculum
    * learners set their own goals
    * the focus is education with the students and builds on cultural knowledge students bring with them to the learning environment
    * learners determine how their inquiry will be structured and conducted
    * learners determine how they will assess their learning

Summary

The findings of this study established a strong link between individual subjectivities and structural-cultural constraints in influencing both decision-making and human agency in contemporary nonparticipating behaviors. Individual and group experiences of cultural struggle and discrimination in educational institutions and in the larger society contribute to the strategic conduct and strategies utilized by individuals in meeting further educational needs and desires. Specific strategies of resistance and production of meaning varied among the study participants.

The methodology and the focus of this study make its contribution unique to the research on issues of nonparticipation: a) consideration of structural constraints in the larger society as well as within the dominant institution of education, b) individuals were viewed as agents acting within a limited range of choices and, c) the study focused on nonparticipating but eligible adults. Thus, the study acknowledged and dealt with the complexity of the interaction effect of structures, human agency, culture, and identity.

Findings suggest that research needs to look beyond simple individual barriers to participation that result in a collection of studies that hoist the blame for nonparticipation onto the individual without recognizing the importance of social strucutral factors. Education is embedded in the larger social context of one's life impacted by social location and historic experiences. In asking questions about the everyday lived reality of individuals, as knowledgeable actors engaged in resisting practices to reaffirm and sustain cultural identity, a broader view is possible.

All the individuals in this study are interested in learning and advancing their academic skill levels, are deeply embedded and connected to their culture, and attempt to reach their educational goals in unique ways. As self directed learners searching for solutions, adult educators must assist individuals from all racial, ethnic, class and gender groups in genuine and compassionate inquiry.

APPENDIX A

FACTORS OF NONPARTICIPATION STUDY

CONSENT FORM

I, ________________________________, agree to participate in a study examining the perceptions and choices of Chicano/a adults regarding adult basic education & English literacy programs. This research is being conducted by Barbara Sparks, an adult educator and doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Risks and Benefits
I understand that participation in this study requires approximately 1-2 hours of interview time. To minimize inconvenience of my time, interviews will be scheduled to fit my schedule as much as possible. These times can be flexible and rearranged to accommodate my activities.

Although there is no personal compensation for my time, the benefit for my involvement in the project is in my contribution to the knowledge base for effective adult education practice.

Safeguards
All information collected is confidential and will not be linked to me. My name will not be used. My identity will be protected through the language and words used.

The data will be published in group form to the adult education community (i.e. at adult education conferences and in educational journals). Should sensitive information be uncovered which could lead to negative consequences the data will be withheld from the educational community as well as others.

The taped interviews and transcripts will be kept in a locked file and access will be restricted.

Freedom to withdraw
Participation is completely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time during the project without penalty. Once the project is completed I may have the results.

I have received an explanation of the study and agree to participate. I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Signature:____Date:____________

This research project has been approved by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects for a one year period.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant's name________________________________Interviewer_______________

Date______________

PART ONE-EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

1. Education
    - How many years of schooling did you complete
    - Where did you attend school

2. Schooling experiences
    - Tell me about your educational experiences as a child
        - Relationships with teachers, students
        - Were you treated any differently based on your race/ethnicity
        - Problems encountered and how they were solved
        - How did you feel about yourself as a student
    - What do you regard as central problems when you think about your past schooling
        - How did you solve them
    - How important was the Spanish language in your education
    - What ideas have you formed about public education based on these past experiences
    - Describe attitudes of teachers
    - Decisions to leave/efforts to return
    - Opportunities; education for self/others

3. Adult Education
    - Tell me about your experiences with adult basic education &/or English literacy
        - Stories from friends or relatives
    - Views about the adult education programs
    - Describe the choices you have made regarding further adult education
    - What things would need to change for you to return to school

4. Children's schooling experiences and your feelings about that

PART TWO-ETHNIC IDENTITY

1. Identity
    - What does it mean to be a Mexican American/Chicano/a
    - What is it like for you
    - Culture and education
        - Values, preferences
        - Expectations
    - Everyday experiences with language and recent incidents
        - Handling of the situations
    - What do you think are some differences between Anglo & Spanish culture
    - How would you characterize differences

2. Community and neighborhood experiences
    - Describe the community you grew up in
    - Kinds of problems experienced in neighborhood
    - Experiences of discrimination
    - Situations involving English literacy, language
        - Feelings about that
        - Learning that occurred
    - Tell me about your living situation
    - Tell me about some of the activities you and your friends did

3. Family and friends (values, beliefs)
    - Memories of family experiences
        - Significant family stories
    - Tell me a story that characterizes your family when you were young
        - any others; memories of family stories and experiences
        - What values were you taught

4. Work and learning; work and English literacy
    - Tell me about a work situation where learning and/or education was an important aspect.
        - How did you feel about this
    - Tell me about a work situation where language and communication played a major role (barrier perhaps)

5. Choices: Limitations and conflicts
    - Perceived choices of work or the decisions made at work
    - Role in community, in city
        - Perceived opportunities or obstacles in this community
        - Participation in events outside immediate neighborhood
        - Perceived choices in housing

PART THREE-BACKGROUND

1. Background
    - Full name (paternal and maternal surname)
    - Where were you born
    - Where were your parents born
    - What is your ethnicity
    - Gender
    - Age

2. Language (Marin et al, 1987)
    - What language do you use for reading or speaking (general)
    - What language do you speak at home
    - What language do you use for thinking
    - What language do you use with friends
    - What language do you use at work

3. Language
    - How important is the Spanish language in your life; what does it mean to you
    - Everyday use of English and/or Spanish
    - Goals in reference to using and/or learning English, if any
    - Perceived ways of increasing English/Spanish language performance
    - Problems experienced in everyday life regarding language
        - Solutions developed

PART FOUR-REFLECTION

1. General Reflection
    How do you make sense of your past experiences in schooling, work, community and family

2. How do those experiences influence your decisions and actions regarding participation in ABE & English literacy

3. Anything else you want to tell me about your past experiences in any of the areas we have talked about

4. Referrals of other potential participants

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